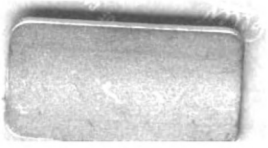
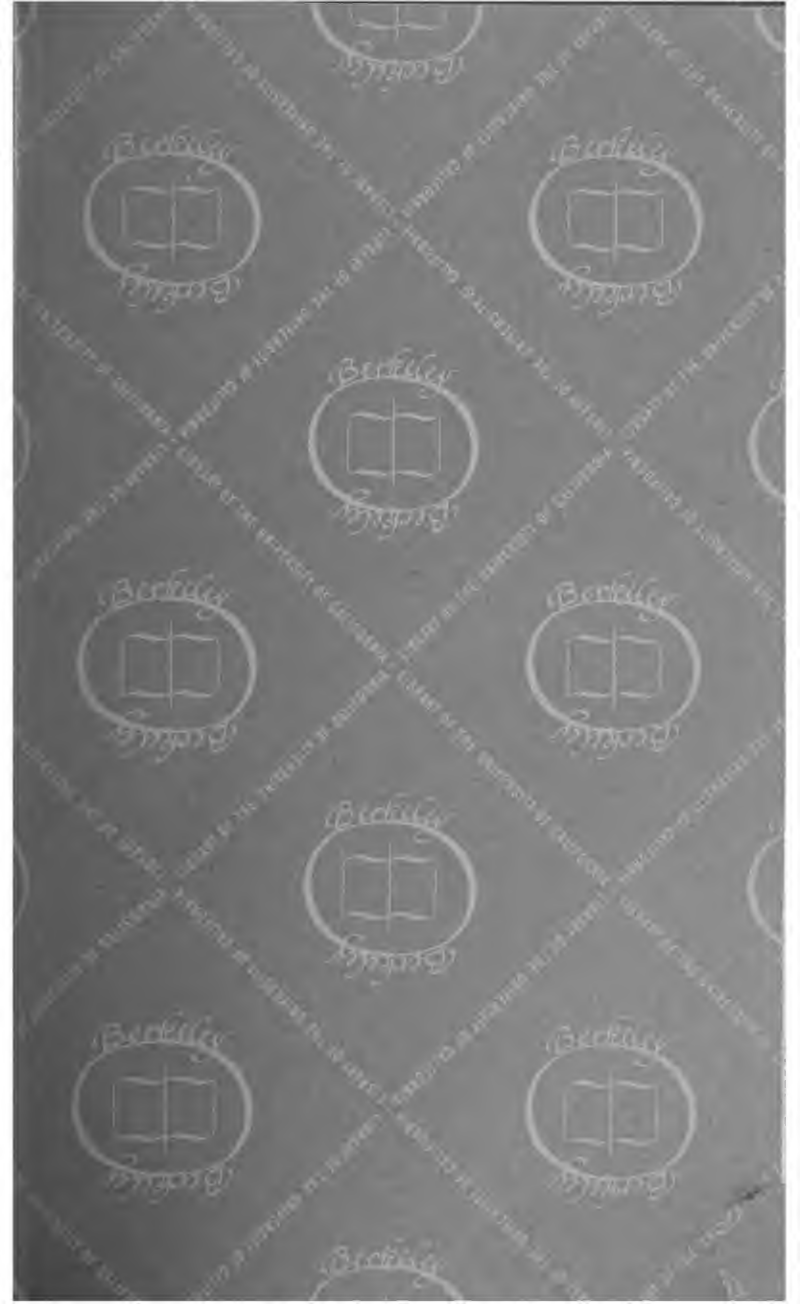
# A HISTORY OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF FLORENCE: FROM THE...

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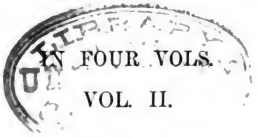
FROM

THE EARLIEST INDEPENDENCE OF THE COMMUNE
TO THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC IN 1531.

BY

T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF "THE GIRLHOOD OF CATHERINE DE' MEDICI," "THE LIFE OF FILIPPO STROZZI," "PAUL THE FRIAR AND PAUL THE POPE," ETC.



IN FOUR VOLS.

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# HISTORY

OF THE

# COMMONWEALTH OF FLORENCE.

## BOOK III.

### CHAPTER III.

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Lucca—Florentines purchase Lucca of Mastino della Scala—But are prevented by the Pisans from taking possession of it—War with Pisa—Lucca offered to King Robert—The Florentines make application to the Emperor Louis—He sends his ambassadors with offers—They are on reflection rejected by the Signory.

A.D. 1328. "*Après moi le Déluge!*" The phrase has become famous of late years; but neither the thought nor even the expression of it is new. Many another, as justly as he, who is said to have been the latest utterer of the words, has fancied, that the pulling of his own little person into the great time-ocean must needs produce a disturbance to be followed by universal cataclysm. But the sun continues to rise and set; and the social affairs of men move on in obedience to a system of law, which, however much a man's living energies may contribute to its operation, and make a part of it, is based on far too large and wide a net result of innumerable men's thoughts and actions, to be thrown out of gear by the cessation of any individual's influence on it.

"I feel that I am dying," said Castruccio to his sons and those around his death-bed; "and when I am gone, *vedrete disasseroccato,*" speaking, says Villani, "in his Lucchese dialect, and meaning, in more plain vernacular, 'you will see revolutions,' or as the Lucchese phrase goes, 'you will see the world come to an end.'" * "This Castruccio," continues the historian, "was very elegant in person, tall, of pleasing figure, clean-limbed, not fat, fair and almost pallid, with straight fair hair, and very pleasing features." Then he proceeds to paint his moral character as follows. The words are remarkable; and contain in them a larger contribution to the sum of the causes, which made the subsequent fortunes of Florence what they were, than all the changes brought about by the death of Castruccio.

* Villani, book x. chap. lxxxvi.

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"This Castruccio," writes Villani, in another part of the chapter already cited, "was a valorous and magnanimous despot*; prudent and sagacious, active and laborious, brave in arms, and of great foresight in war, very enterprising in his undertakings, much feared and dreaded, and in his time he did many noble and notable things. He was a great scourge to his fellow citizens, and to the Florentines, and Pisans, and Pistoians, and to all the Tuscans for the fifteen years during which he was Lord of Lucca. He was very cruel in tormenting and putting men to death; ungrateful for services received in his need and necessities; inclined to new friends and new people; exceedingly vainglorious by reason of his state and sovereignty; and to sum up all, he fancied himself master of Florence, and king of all Tuscany. . . . . He confessed and received the sacrament and extreme unction very devoutly; but he died in great error, in as much as he never admitted that he had offended God by offending Holy Church; satisfying his conscience with the reflection, that he had acted with good grounds for the advantage of his own power, and that of the community to which he belonged." A.D. 1328.

Whether or not the character thus drawn may have been entirely just to the subject of it, or may have been in some degree coloured by the bias very natural to a Florentine in writing of Castruccio Castracane, is of infinitely less interest than the fact, that a writer, who was assuredly rather above than below the average morality, intelligence, and enlightenment of his time, should have so written of any man. The tone of sentiment, which is so remarkable in the passage, runs through the whole of the writings of that period, and strikes the modern reader with strange effect again and again, in the pages of the old historians,

* "*Tiranno.*" The word means simply an absolute ruler.



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A.D. 1328. as often as any opportunity occurs for the manifestation of their own moral feelings and opinions. The passage quoted is only a good specimen of the phenomenon to which I would direct the reader's attention.

Villani, whom we may well accept as a favourable exponent of the moral sense of his age and country, considers it quite natural to describe an ungrateful, vainglorious, cruel tormenter and murderer, who was for fifteen years the scourge of his fellow citizens, as "magnanimous," and the author of many noble (*belle*) actions. Is it too much to say, that in a community where such a tone of moral sentiment prevailed, it was vain to hope for such an amount of public virtue, as should suffice to fit that community for advantageous self-government? It is true that the notions which the writer expresses by the word "*magnanimo*," are not altogether the same as those which correspond with the modern sense of the English translation of the term. But this difference itself is but the indication and measure of a different level of moral feeling. The *great-mindedness* which could be exhibited by acts compatible with all the evil qualities shown in the writer's picture, is deemed by him a quality worthy of admiration. It must be observed, that these good and bad qualities are not represented as existing in the same man inconsistently with each other, by virtue of the inconsistencies of character, and struggles of the better with the worse nature, which are incident to humanity. That is not the representation of the writer. The great-mindedness is manifested by the same actions which are characterised by the other epithets. And the true causes of a state of moral sentiment, which could make it possible for a writer to claim admiration for conduct which he at the same time depicts as so detestable, are to be found in that dualism introduced into men's minds by the doctrines and practices of Catholicism. Two sets of sentiments, two systems

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of measurement and estimation were established in the conscience of mankind. There was the religious scale of estimation, which was one thing; and the common world's scale, which was quite another thing, to be recognised and accepted, *de facto;* and to be reconciled with the other *de jure* order of ideas, not by any bringing of the one into accordance with the other, but by certain forms and practices, which were provided, not so much to reconcile the two codes, as to supply something that should make the reconciliation unnecessary. A.D. 1328.

The revolutions, which Castruccio prophesied would occur after his death, did occur to a certain extent. But the progress of the Florentine history was shaped much more by the qualities which circumstances had generated in the Florentines themselves, than by the event of his removal from the scene, which they hailed as so great a deliverance. The Florentine arms continued to be unfortunate, although Castruccio no longer fought against them. We have seen abundant reason why they should have been so. If mercenary troops are but a dangerous and unsure resource for any state to trust to for its liberties and its defence, they are especially ill-adapted to the service of a democratic government, in which the jealousy of authority is so great, that not even a general in the field, or a war minister at home, could be entrusted with full and discretionary power. What could be expected from military operations, in which disputes as to the conduct of the war in the camp, were referred to an equally disputatious senate of civilians at home?

Another death occurred that same winter, on the 9th of November, the news of which was heard in Florence with considerable satisfaction. It was that of their "Signore," Charles, Duke of Calabria. The whole city went into mourning, when the intelligence of his death reached Florence on the 17th of November; and a magnificent

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A.D. 1328. funeral service was performed in Santa Croce, to which the Florentines thronged in such numbers that not only the church but the whole piazza was crowded. But for all that the news of his death was good news in Florence. He had been "Signore" of the city for now two years; and the Florentines were tired of him, and of the Neapolitan officers of various sorts whom he had quartered upon them. The immense sums of money that he continued to draw from the city had caused very general discontent; so that, "in Florence great appearance of mourning was made, but because of the heavy burthens, and the little good that the Florentines got of him, it was very different in their hearts." * Had he not died when he did, there would have been, Villani thinks, a rebellion in the city against him.

Dante has left on record in his undying verse a bitter sneer at the unstable fickleness, which led the Florentines to make continual changes in the political constitution of their government. But the charge against them should have been a deeper and more searching one. The frequent mutations of the names, numbers, functions, duration, and modes of electing their magistrates were not caused by mere fickleness, and desire of change. On each occasion on which a change was made, there was at least such justification for it as could be found in the unsatisfactory working of the system to be superseded. But the error lay in fancying, as other nations in far more experienced ages of the world have fancied since their day, that mischiefs arising from want of knowledge and want of virtue might be remedied and got rid of by clever constitution-making. Given a mass of grievous ignorance as to the true objects and scope of civil government, of mutual mistrust and suspicion, of factious hatreds, of greater desire

* Coppo Stefani, book vi. rubr. cccexliv.; Villani, book x. chap. cvii.

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for the power to coerce another than for guarantees of freedom for oneself; required such a cunning manipulation of these materials as shall evolve out of them a trustworthy, pure, and patriotic government. This was the problem which the Florentines were continually making new efforts to solve. But as it was one manifestly insoluble; as no system of checks, and no amount of double or threefold election could impart knowledge or virtue to those who had them not, each new arrangement proved unsatisfactory, and the sanguine citizens set to work to shuffle their ballot boxes, and their black and white beans anew. A.D. 1328.

Progress was made, however, in one direction at each of these mutations of the constitution. The popular element in the government was steadily increased. Direct power and influence in the management of the public affairs was given at every change to ever larger and lower grades of the social pyramid. No improvement ensued from this progress; because the Florentine people did not hate arbitrary power. On the contrary, they liked it, and thought that good might come from the exercise of it. Only they desired to be the exercisers and not the objects of it. And this was the scope of all their revolutions.

When the city had been left at leisure to attend to such matters by the death of Castruccio, and had once again become its own ruler by the death of the Duke of Calabria, one of the first things done was to effect one of these periodical remodellings of the constitution. The gist of the change was that the Priors, instead of being chosen by their respective guilds as formerly, should be appointed by a mixed system of election and chance. The Priors in office, together with two men of the people out of each ward of the city, were to place on a list the names of "all the *Guelph* citizens"—(how the radical vice, that made it all fruitless, crops out!)—eligible to the office of Prior. A great many other officers and magistrates, each similarly

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A.D. 1328. assisted by assessors taken from the people, were to do the same for their respective offices. Then all these magistrates with their assessors, making up together a body of ninety-eight persons, were to meet together, and every name on the lists was to be balloted for by the whole ninety-eight, —and every name, which obtained sixty-eight votes, was to be put into a bag or purse, which was then delivered in a strong-box, locked with three locks, to be kept in the sacristy of the friars of Santa Croce. The three keys were to be entrusted, one to a certain convent of friars outside the city, one to the man of business of the same convent, and the third to the captain of the people. A private register of the names so put into the bag, was confided to the keeping of the friars of St. Mark. All this was to be done once every two* years in January. Then as the vacancies in the different offices occurred, the outgoing magistrates three days before the expiration of their term, caused the box to be brought to the Palazzo, and duly opened by the holders of the keys in their presence; and the names for the new officers were drawn by chance from the bag. "But," says Villani, "these excellent arrangements soon became corrupted and vitiated by the party spirit of evil-minded citizens, who were determined at all costs to rule over the others, by means of fraudulently putting into the bag the names of their own adherents, who were not worthy of the office, and leaving out those who were worthy and legally eligible."†

After the death of Castruccio, the Florentines found little difficulty in making peace with Pistoia, and several other places which his influence had rendered hostile to them. But Lucca, which had been for so many years a useful ally of Florence, and an important support of the the Guelph cause, remained Ghibelline, and therefore

* Afterward changed to once every three years.
† Villani, book x. chap. cviii.

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hostile to the great Guelph Commonwealth. The sons of Castruccio, however, were not able to maintain their hold on the city long. And the vicissitudes through which "*Lucca la industriosa*" passed during the following years may be briefly told as a specimen of the sort of existence endured by the less powerful Communes in that confused and anarchic fourteenth century. The recital may serve to show, that great as were the troubles which, as has been seen, Florence had to endure, yet it was better to be a citizen of the great Guelph Commonwealth than of one even of the largest and wealthiest of the cities of a second rank. A.D. 1329.

The changes in the fate and fortunes of the storm-tossed little city of Lucca were so violent, and the events succeeded each other with such rapidity, that a volume would be needed to relate in detail its history during the three or four years that followed the death of Castruccio. And as a few pages only can be here devoted to the purpose, the wonderful series of phantasmagoric changes can but be shown with the rapidity suggested by that phrase.

On the 26th of March, 1329, "the Bavarian," as old Villani invariably and contemptuously calls the Emperor Louis, being then at Pisa, hearing that there was fighting at Lucca between the sons of Castruccio and others of the great Ghibelline families, who were not disposed to endure their domination, thought it a good opportunity to seize the city for himself. So he rode over at the head of a squadron of German cavalry, fell on both the contending parties, burned a number of palaces and houses in the heart of the town; and having thus "reformed the city,"*

* Villani, book x. chap. cxxiii. "*Riformò la terra.*" The phrase, which is met with in almost every page of the old chroniclers, is as it were a technical one; and signifies, an upsetting of all the existing authorities, and the installation of new ones in their places, with more or less violent abolition of the deposed and their adherents, by death, imprisonment, confiscation, or exile.

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A.D. 1329. set up one Luca Francesco Castracane as his vicar, and departed.

But on the 11th of the following month, "the Bavarian" was obliged to hurry into Lombardy to look after his interests in Milan. And no sooner was his back turned than a band of German toopers, who had deserted from his standard, and set up as knights errant on their own account, and who were then in the Valdinivole, electing Marco Visconti, one of the ousted lords of Milan, their captain, and instigated by promises of money from Florence, marched on Lucca on the 15th of April. The unfortunate inhabitants, hoping to save themselves from worse, gave up the city without resistance, so that those only were slain who resisted the robbery of the conquerors. The latter despatched messengers to Florence, demanding the money promised them, and offering for certain further payments to give up the city to the Florentines. There was, however, much difference of opinion on the subject in Florence, and eventually the proposal was not accepted.*

In the following July, Pisa, which on the departure of the Emperor from Tuscany, had also thrown off her allegiance to him, hearing of the offer of Lucca to the Florentines for sale, entered into negotiations with the vendors for the purchase of it on their own account for 60,000 golden florins;—certainly dirt cheap, if the title to the property had been a somewhat more secure one. So anxious were the Pisans for the bargain, that they paid down 13,000 florins, as earnest money, which, as the Florentine writer records with a sneer and a chuckle, they eventually lost, by having been too much in a hurry, and having taken no hostages or security for their money. For Florence, though she had declined the purchase herself,

* Villani, book x. chap. cxxvii.

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would not permit her rival to become the owner of so important a make-weight in the balance of Tuscan party politics as Lucca. So the Florentines marched against Pisa, burning and ravaging the Pisan territory up to the gates of the city. Whereupon the Pisans, feeling themselves to be in a critical position in consequence of their recent rebellion against the Emperor, made peace with Florence, abandoning their proposed purchase, and entering into an alliance offensive and defensive against "the Bavarian." And the German freebooters, with Marco Visconti at their head, thus lost their second customer for the city on sale.* A.D. 1329.

But in the last days of August another presented himself in the person of Messer Gherardino Spinola, of Genoa, who offered 30,000 florins, undertaking at the same time to retain a portion of the German troops in his service. But the Germans, before accepting this proposal, made a second attempt to obtain better terms from Florence. As the Signory seemed still little disposed to make the purchase, "certain rich and powerful citizens of Florence" conceived a plan of buying the city on their own account, in order that what appeared to them so great and advantageous an opportunity should not be lost to their country. The price named was now 80,000 florins; and the plan proposed was, that certain Lucchese merchants, who were willing to take a share in the speculation, should find 10,000 florins, while the authors of the scheme would advance 56,000; so that there would remain only 14,000 to be paid by the Commonwealth; that the city should be at once delivered over to the Signory of Florence, the customs and gate dues only being left in the hands of those who advanced the money; but that the first moneys received from these sources should go to repay the 14,000

* Villani, book x. chap. cxxxiv.

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A.D. 1329. florins advanced by the Commune, and the remainder of the sum should be received thence by the authors of the scheme only after the Commune had been repaid. Villani tells us that he was employed in these negotiations; and, as it is known that he was an inferior partner in the great and enormously wealthy house of Peruzzi, it strikes me as very probable that that powerful firm was the proposed purchaser of the city of Lucca. The scheme again fell through, to Villani's great disgust and indignation, in consequence, as he says, of the "ill-conditioned and disloyal envy" of certain citizens, who "with false hypocrisy urged that the reputation of the city would suffer, if it were told throughout the world, that the Florentines for greed of money-gain had bought the city of Lucca." If in truth this was the only reason brought forward against the proposal, it may be safely set down to "false hypocrisy." But the Signory might, it seems to me, have with much prudence replied to the proposal, that if Florence bought Lucca, she would assuredly have to fight to keep it; and that it would in the end come cheaper to obtain the city, as well as hold it by that means. The remarks, however, of Villani on the occasion are too characteristic of the sentiments of the period to be omitted. "But in my opinion," he says, having recorded the objections put forward by the hypocrisy of the party opposed to him, "and in that of all the competent men who have looked into this affair, it seems, that in compensation for the defeats and damage received and money expended by the Commonwealth of Florence on account of Lucca, in the war with Castruccio, no more consummate vengeance could be taken by the Florentines, or greater glory and reputation accrue to them, than that they should be able to tell through all the world that the merchants and private citizens of Florence had with their own money purchased Lucca, and bought as slaves its citizens and the inhabitants of its territory, who had been

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their enemies. But God takes away common sense from those against whom he has ill-will."* A.D. 1330.

As they could make no bargain therefore with the Florentines, the German freebooters ultimately knocked down the city a bargain to Messer Gherardino della Spinola for 30,000 florins, and he took possession of his purchase on the 2nd of September, 1329. A more hazardous investment, one would say, was never made. And in fact a very little time elapsed before Messer Gherardino found that he would have done far better to keep his money in the Levant trade than speculate in cities and governorships. His first care was to endeavour to make peace and a treaty with the Florentines. But, as might have been expected, they peremptorily refused to recognise him in any way. They sent out an expedition, on the contrary, against some of the out-post castles of his territory, and suffered the humiliation of being worsted by the forces of the Genoese citizen.

But he was not allowed to remain long in peaceable possession of his purchase. On the 27th of December in that same year, the sons of Castruccio, with the remains of the German forces that had been in the pay of their father, made an attempt to recover possession of the city. The Lucchese, however, who had found reason to prefer the rule of their Genoese purchaser to that of their own nobles, supported him, and succeeded in driving out the intruders after a day of confusion and fighting in the streets.†

In the September of the following year, Messer Gherardino having discovered that some of the Lucchese nobles were carrying on intrigues with Florence, with the intention of delivering Lucca into the hands of the Florentines, seized them and summarily beheaded them in the

* "A cui Dio vuole male."—Villani, book x. chap. cxl.
† Villani, book x. chap. cxlvii.

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A.D. 1330. piazza. But neither did this act of rigour render him at all the more secure. On the 5th of October the Florentines sent a large force to besiege the much troubled city in due form. They succeeded in cutting off all supplies of food from the Lucchese, and reduced them to great distress. They had also the high satisfaction of repaying in kind the insult of the races which Castruccio had caused to be run beneath their walls. They now did exactly the same beneath the walls of Lucca. The races run were precisely the same as those of which the remembrance was so bitter to the Florentines;—the first was run by horses for the prize of a pomegranate on the point of a lance, with twenty-five new golden florins stuck in it;—the second by foot runners for the prize of a piece of scarlet cloth;—and the third run by the infamous women of the camp for a piece of cotton camlet. In order to top the insult they had received, they further proclaimed that any of the besieged who chose to come out to see the sport might have a free safe-conduct for the purpose. Under the pressure of famine, a secret negotiation was entered on by a party among the Lucchese for giving up the city to the Florentines. But once again the jealousies between the members of the Florentine government prevented this opportunity from being taken advantage of. And at the same time a violent quarrel in the camp between the German mercenaries and the rest of the army, which if the Lucchese had been a little more on the alert, and a little less dispirited by famine, might have led to the entire rout of the Florentine forces, threw away their chance of obtaining the city by force of arms. For it gave Messer Gherardino courage and opportunity to send off messengers to John, King of Bohemia, the son of the Emperor Henry VII., who had recently come into Italy to see what could be got out of the prestige of his father's name, offering to give up Lucca to him on certain con-

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ditions. The whole of the autumn and winter had been consumed by the Florentines in this useless siege, and it was in February, 1332, that the above-mentioned offer was made to John of Bohemia, who immediately sent his marshal with eight hundred German cavalry to take possession of his prize. The Florentine army had been so weakened by the discord which had broken out in it, that its commanders, judging that they were not strong enough to resist the new comers, drew off on the 25th of February, and left King John to take quiet possession of his acquisition. Of course, under such circumstances, the "conditions" which Messer Gherardino had made were of little value. When he ventured to mention them to his Bohemian Majesty, he was told that he was a traitor for having attempted to sell the city to the Florentines. "And the said Messer Gherardino took himself off, grumbling much against King John and against the Lucchese, and grieving for his 30,000 florins, which he never saw again." * A.D. 1332.

Lucca continued to be held for the King of Bohemia by his marshal; but the Lucchese had seen nothing of their new lord, when they received a visit from his son Charles in the first days of 1333.† The citizens made preparations to receive him with great festivities, but were sadly taken aback when he told them he was going away again directly, but wanted 40,000 florins before he set out. With great difficulty, says Villani, giving by the phrase a striking proof of the vast difference there was at that time between the wealth of Florence and that of Lucca, the citizens got together 25,000, with which he was forced to

* Villani, book x. chaps. clxiv., clxix.

† The reader, who is inclined to consult Villani's detailed account of all these events, must remember, in noting the dates as he will there find them, that the old Florentine year began with March; and that the month called here January, 1333, is called by the old Florentine writers, January, 1332.

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A.D. 1333. content himself. In fact his father had found that he had got pretty well all that he could squeeze out of the Italian cities, and was thinking of recrossing the Alps. He tried before he went to sell Lucca, offering it to the Pisans, to the Florentines and others, but failed to make any bargain. In the September of that year the sons of Castruccio, hearing that he was about to leave Italy, thought that it was a good opportunity for one more effort to recover their heritage; and making a sudden dash at the city with their German troopers, they got possession of it, and succeeded in holding it for a couple of days. King John, however, hearing of this attempt at Parma, and thinking that something yet might be got out of the city, sufficient to make it worth his while not to suffer it to be snatched from him in this manner, rode thither at the head of a body of troops with such promptitude that the Castracani and the Lucchese could hardly believe their eyes when they saw him. He succeeded in at once putting to flight the "*Duchini*," as the sons of Castruccio were called in Lucca; and then, giving the city into the hands of the Rossi family of Parma as a pledge for 35,000 florins, he took himself off out of Italy. He pawned in like manner the cities of Parma, Modena, and Reggio to different noble families, receiving large sums from each. "Such and so honourable," says Villani, "was the departure of the King of Bohemia from Tuscany and Lombardy."* He finally quitted Italy on the 15th of October, 1333.

Notwithstanding the above extraordinary series of changes, Lucca was too important a prize to be retained long by a family of Parmesan nobles, holding it partly as it would seem in charge, and partly in pawn for a distant king of Bohemia. Nevertheless, the Rossi kept possession of the "industrious" city—(the classical epithet contrasts

* Villani, book x. chap. ccxxv.

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sadly with the foregoing passage from its annals)—for a longer space than most of their immediate predecessors, and quite long enough probably to indemnify themselves, notwithstanding the inroads of the Florentines on the territory, for the 35,000 florins they had advanced upon "the property." A.D. 1333.

For some time past,—from the death of the Emperor Henry VII. at Buonconvento, in 1313, it might be said perhaps, if a certain date were to be fixed,—the line of demarcation dividing the Guelph and Ghibelline parties had been becoming more and more a broken and undecided one, not only in Florence where the same thing had been evident long before, but in Italy generally. The party names were as much in the mouths of men, and the pages of the historians are as full of them as ever. But the definite opinions and principles, and the consistent political parties formerly known by those names, had ceased to be living realities. And the familiar words served little other purpose than the perpetuation of hereditary and traditional hatreds, and the pretext and convenient rallying cry for new leagues and combinations formed in accordance with other motives and interests. The Ghibellines most conspicuously broke up their old party connections, and abandoned anything like political principle as a bond of union between them;—naturally so, inasmuch as the whole progress of society tended to make their code of principles obsolete, and to render the *beau idéal* of old Ghibellinism an impossibility. The conduct of the Emperor Louis the Bavarian had done much towards thus breaking up and destroying the unity of the Ghibelline party. His quarrel with the Visconti of Milan was a very fatal blow to genuine Ghibellinism, throwing as it did the ousted but still powerful Visconti into connections and alliances with any body and any party which might serve to help them back into their places. The



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A.D. 1336-9. quarrel with Castruccio, who may perhaps be considered as the last of the Ghibellines, who was a true party leader, having a large party policy and views based on the ascendancy of true Ghibelline principles, was a still more fatal blunder, which by making discord between the most able man in Italy and his natural political chieftain, would have still more completely put an end to Ghibellinism, had not the results of it been cut short by Castruccio's untimely death.

The Florentines were still firmly Guelph in principle, so far as that name may be taken to stand for devotion to the cause of popular government, and firmly Guelph in name, inasmuch as the word expressed the still unforgotten hatred of certain names and things connected in the popular mind with the old Ghibellinism of former days within the walls of the city, and the party watchword in the contests of later times, with the foreign enemies of the Commonwealth.

The downfall of the Visconti in Milan caused by Louis the Bavarian, but which he could not have effected had not that family made themselves odious to their subjects by their exactions and oppression, led to the notable rise in Lombardy of the Scala family of Verona, in power, influence, and importance. They were Ghibellines of course, inasmuch as they governed absolutely in Verona, and sought to reduce to equal servitude any other cities and territories on which they could lay their hands. They ought not, therefore, to have been enemies to their neighbour tyrants, the Visconti of Milan, who shortly recovered their lordship of that city. It was a case of crows picking out crows' eyes, which notably indicated the confused and disorganised state of parties that has been mentioned. But in the war which mainly occupied Florence during the years 1336-9, the Florentine arms, leagued with those of Milan and Venice against Mastino della Scala, were

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commanded by Luchino Visconti, Lord of Milan, as generalissimo of the league. A.D. 1336-9.

This connection of Florence with the Ghibelline tyrants of Lombardy had begun however in 1332, under a still stranger aspect. A league, which really has more of the appearance of having been inspired by an Italian desire to drive out a "barbarian" invader, than any other of the events of all those centuries, was formed against "the Bavarian," and John of Bohemia, who had both of them so manifestly shown that their business in Italy was not to uphold any political principle of any kind, but simply to squeeze out of the country whatever could be squeezed. To this league were parties in strange association—King Robert of Naples, the Florentines, the Visconti of Milan, the Della Scala of Verona, and some other Lombard Lords of cities of lesser note. To make the confusion of parties and of all the old party principles the more complete, the Pope's legate in Lombardy was on the side of the Emperor; and Robert of Naples, hitherto the consistent supporter of the Church, was fighting against him. "Observe, reader," says Villani,* "how the world changes! To think that King Robert, chief of the Church party and of the Guelphs, and the Commonwealth of Florence, of which the like may be said, leaguing themselves in company with the greatest tyrants and Ghibellines in Italy, and specially with Messer Azzo Visconti of Milan, who when fighting under Castruccio helped to defeat the Florentines at Altopascio, and then marched in hostility up to the very walls of Florence, as has been before narrated. But King Robert and the Florentines were induced to this by their grave suspicions of the designs of 'the Bavarian,' and of King John, and by their anger against the legate for taking part with the latter."

* Book x. chap. cci.



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A.D. 1335. The league thus constituted was very successful in taking from the King of Bohemia, represented only by his lieutenants and vicars, the different cities of which he had possessed himself. But, as might have been expected, difficulties soon arose as to the distribution of the spoil. The Rossi found themselves obliged to give up Parma; upon which Azzo Visconti and Mastino della Scala very nearly came to open rupture on the subject. The Florentines succeeded, however, in making peace between them; and having been named as arbiters in the matter by the two princes, assigned Parma to Mastino, undertaking that Piacenza, as soon as the league should obtain possession of it, should be given up to Azzo Visconti. In this decision the Florentines had not been however altogether impartial arbiters; as Mastino had promised them, that when the Rossi should be forced to abandon Lucca, it should be handed over to them.

On the 20th of December, 1335, the case in question occurred. Orlando Rossi, who held Lucca, pressed by his brothers who had given up Parma, and seeing that there was no chance of any support from King John, came to terms with Mastino della Scala, who persisted in asserting that he was acting in the name of the league, and for the behoof of the Florentines, and gave up the city into his hands. But it very soon became apparent that Mastino, having once obtained possession of the prize, had no intention of relinquishing it. "He broke his promise," says Villani,* "like a felon and traitor as he was;—like a false and disloyal tyrant, who had with inordinate and vain greed, and by evil counsel, conceived the idea that by means of Lucca and by his own prowess he might become Lord of all Tuscany. And from this treacherous breach of faith arose sundry strange events and changes, brought

* Book xi. chap. xl.

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about by the Florentines in consequence of it both in Lombardy and Tuscany." A.D. 1336.

Florence had believed in perfect good faith, that she was at last, after so many disappointments and miscarriages, about to attain that favourite object of the ambition of so many generations of her citizens, the sovereignty of Lucca. And the rage and mortification felt by all classes of the citizens was proportionably violent when it was found that this hope was once again to be deluded. Before taking any ulterior measures however, the Commonwealth determined to send ambassadors to Verona, where the chief of the league were assembled, to make a formal demand on Mastino for the performance of his promise. The Della Scala brothers—(Mastino and his brother Alberto, reigned together in Verona)—put off the Florentine envoys from day to day with various excuses as long as they could; and at last, being encouraged by the other members of the league, who began to be jealous of the rising power of the Scala family, and were well pleased to see them embark in a quarrel with Florence, they pretended that it had been necessary to pay a vast sum of money to the King of Bohemia to obtain possession of Lucca, that this money was secured on the revenues of the city, and that they could not give it up, unless the sum was restored to them. And they named the monstrous amount of 360,000 golden florins. The envoys brought back this reply to the Signory, which after some debate determined not to let money stand in the way of the great object in view, and sent them back with an acceptance of the terms.

Villani does not fail to point out the inconsistency and bad management of those who refused to purchase for 80,000 in 1329, and afterwards for a still smaller sum from Messer Gherardino Spinola, that for which they were now willing to give 360,000. He finds it impossible to account

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A.D. 1336. for such conduct, save on the theory of a judicial blindness inflicted for special purposes of Providence. But it may perhaps with greater certainty be taken to indicate the intense degree to which the desire to possess their object had been irritated by all the slips which had happened between the lips of the Commonwealth and the cup for which they had thirsted.

But when the acceptance of his terms was announced to Mastino, he replied, that in fact he was not in want of money, as he had abundance of it. What he did really want was the assistance of the Florentines to conquer and make himself master of Bologna; and for this service he should be prepared to resign Lucca to them.

Then the Florentine envoys shook the dust off their feet as they went out from Verona. The indignation of Florence knew no bounds. And the contemporary historian, who speaks the feelings of his city on the subject, abuses the two brothers in a tirade which culminates in quoting the words of Holy Writ against them, as men have a habit of doing when they feel particularly savage against their enemies. "In them," he cries, "are fulfilled the words of the Gospel put by the Holy Spirit into the mouth of our Lady; 'He hath shewed strength with his arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts; He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble and meek.'" *

It was not without reason that the other potentates of Lombardy began to be alarmed at the preponderating power of the House of Scala. Mastino and his brother were now masters of Verona, Padua, Vicenza, Treviso, Brescia, Feltro, Belluno, Parma, Modena, and Lucca. The revenue which they drew from these ten cities and their dependencies amounted to 700,000 florins a year,

* Villani, book xi. chap. l.

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a sum, says Villani, "which no monarch of Christendom possesses, unless it be the King of France." A.D. 1336.

The Florentines were well aware, therefore, that they were taking a very serious business on their hands in quarrelling with such a power. But for once the city was in accord upon the subject. "Every man felt as if the wrong had been done by Mastino to himself personally; and it was determined to carry out the enterprize with magnificence."

The first necessity was to find money; and the second to find allies. It happened that the Commonwealth was less than usually well circumstanced in the first respect. The very large sums, which the recent wars had cost, had drained the exchequer; and the customs were already charged with a debt of more than 100,000 florins. But it was necessary to have at least that sum in ready cash to begin the war. So a board of ten members was appointed with ample powers to pledge the public credit, and to them was assigned the duty of finding the money. They called for the counsel of "certain wise and clever merchants," of whom Villani the historian was one, and they succeeded in making an arrangement with the guilds, by which it was agreed that they should furnish all the money needed by the Commonwealth, one third of which they would themselves advance, and two thirds of which they would raise among the citizens on their own credit, in the case of such subscribers to the loan as might prefer their guarantee to that of the State. Those who lent directly to the State were to receive fifteen per cent. annual interest. Those who lent to the guilds were to have eight per cent.; and those companies were to receive five per cent. commission on that part of the loan. In this manner 100,000 florins were raised at once; and when they were spent, more money as it was needed was found in the same manner.

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A.D. 1336. Less difficulty attended the other matter,—that of finding allies; the Della Scala brothers, sons of Can Grande, the main founder of the family greatness, whose name is now chiefly known in the world as that of the tenant of the most marvellous of those marvellous sepulchres at the well-known street corner in Verona,—Mastino and Alberto della Scala had become too powerful for the security of the other Lombard Lords of cities, and were now aspiring to dominion and power in other districts of Italy. It was not difficult for the Commonwealth of Florence to find allies against such an enemy. Luchino Visconti was quite ready to put the resources of Milan and his own name and military talents at the service of a league, against a family that threatened to obscure the Visconti greatness, as it had already outbalanced the Visconti preponderance in Lombardy. But the Florentine Signory thought they saw the possibility of obtaining also another alliance of infinitely greater importance. The Della Scala had, after many efforts, made themselves Lords of Padua. The lion of St. Mark began to growl. They were coming much nearer to his own sea-girt lair than that watchful and jealous power could brook. But when the audacious intruder ventured to put his hand upon the salt lagoons of Chioggia, the noble beast roared amain.

"If we could make common cause with the lion!" thought the burgher Priors in their modest Florence home. "That would be a thing indeed!" A thing hardly to be hoped; seeing that it was not on record that the Venetians had ever condescended to alliance with any Lord or Commune, "by reason of their exceeding mightiness and state."* Then again, all their tendencies were imperial and Ghibelline; and Florence had fought against Venice

* Villani, book xi. chap. l.

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under the banner of the Church. In short, it was clear, A.D. 1336. says Villani, that nothing but a special interposition of Providence, motived by the very intelligible desire of Heaven to beat down and abase the pride of the Scala family, could bring about the success of such a scheme. However, the Commonwealth plucked up its courage, and despatched ambassadors to the proud Queen of the Adriatic, who, treating the matter "with infinite art and flattery of the Venetians," * succeeded in the great object. "And mark, reader, that this was the loftiest emprize ever entered on by the Commune of Florence, as will be apparent presently; and further, that it was a most wonderful thing for many reasons, that the Commune of Venice should consent to league itself with that of Florence." †

This was the tone of mind prevailing in Florence, when the citizens with very unusual unanimity determined on carrying on the war "with all possible magnificence." At all cost, money, and money in abundance, must be found. There was not a man in Florence, who would not have felt bitter personal humiliation, if any symptom had been allowed to appear of Florence not being able to carry on the war quite on equal terms with its magnificent ally. It was the case of a very warm and well-to-do, and not a little purse-proud trader, accustomed nevertheless to great frugality and simplicity of living at home, who finds himself embarked in partnership, for a special object, with some very high and mighty, and magnificent grand seigneur of fabulous wealth and lavish habits of expenditure. It is no time now for the thrifty habits that are all very well at home in simple-living Tuscany. Now is the time to spend! And Florence could spend the produce of her industry and economy with the best, upon occasion.

* Villani, book xi. chap. 1. † *Ibid.*

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A.D. 1338. So two "wise and discreet citizens" were appointed to reside in Venice during the war, for the prompt disbursement of all payments needed. The necessary sums were transmitted regularly every month to their credit in the Adriatic city; and these sums were found, at the end of the war, to have amounted to 25,000 golden florins a month. Two other envoys, a cavalier and a Doctor of Laws, were appointed to reside also in Venice, to advise with the Doge and his Council as to the prosecution of the war; and two other envoys, both knights, were to remain as Florentine commissioners in the camp. The alliance between the two Communes was formally ratified and published on the 21st of June, 1336; and the war was begun by an incursion of the allied forces on the territory of Treviso.

And the contest was continued with alternating fortunes till the autumn of 1338. The conduct and the events of the war were of the usual kind. The burning of a village in one district was successfully and satisfactorily balanced by the destruction of the crops in another. No definitive or decisive result was obtained beyond the destruction of an enormous quantity of the produce of human labour, and the infliction of an enormous quantity of human misery. The most important and memorable event of the war, was the performance beneath the walls of Verona of their usual war races by the Florentines. But gradually the struggle was going against Mastino; and his brother Alberto was a prisoner in Venice. He was in considerable danger, too, of losing Vicenza. Under these circumstances he sued to the Venetians for peace. They on their side had wrested from him the salt lagoons, which were the first cause of their anger against him, and the city of Treviso.

So it fell out, as alas! it is but too apt to fall out, when great folks make alliances with little ones for their own

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ends, that lordly Venice, having gained her own objects, threw over her shop-keeping ally, and made a peace on her own terms with the enemy. Venetian ambassadors made their appearance in Florence, and haughtily announced that Venice had seen fit to conclude peace with the House of Scala; and that, in the interest of Florence, she had arranged that the various castles held by the Commonwealth in the Lucchese territory should be secured to the Florentines;—that if that did not suit her, she might carry on the war on her own account, as Venice, for her part, had decided on making peace. A.D. 1339.

This was very hard to be borne! Venice had sworn in the treaty of alliance to make no peace save by common accord. Venice knew right well that the whole object of Florence in spending without stint her blood and treasure in this war, was the acquisition of Lucca. And now yet once again the citizens were to be disappointed,—defrauded; for was it not fraud?—of this great object of their ambition and longing! Florence felt, as Villani says, that "it was too bad!"* They had thought, he adds, that in dealing with the Venetians they could trust them, as they could their own people; they had fully believed in the sincerity of their alliance, and had been firmly persuaded that they should possess Lucca as the prize of the war.

At a secret sitting of the Signory it was debated what answer should be made to the announcement of the Venetians. Several in the assembly were for listening to the voice of their indignation, and replying that Florence would accede to no such peace. Other more prudent members of the government adverted to the financial position of the Commonwealth, indebted to private citizens more than 450,000 golden florins, secured upon the customs' dues,

* "Parve loro troppo male."—Book xi. chap. xc.

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A.D. 1341. which were pledged for the next six years; and urged the necessity of allowing the city a breathing space to recruit its strength. The more moderate counsels prevailed. Ambassadors were sent to Venice to beg of that city at least so far to be true to her engagements, as to make the delivery of Lucca to the Florentines a condition of the peace. But they had secret instructions not to come away without signing the peace, if they found that they could gain no better terms.

The Florentine envoys spent many days, says Villani, "in striving to get the better of the Venetians; but the perfidious wretches, descended from the blood of Antenor, that traitor to his country Troy, following pertinaciously their own intent, could not be moved."

So the Florentine envoys were obliged reluctantly to sign the peace on the 24th of January, 1339.

There remained, however, some matters of account to be settled with the Venetian government, which demanded 36,000 florins from Florence. The latter claimed certain sums as a set-off against the demand of Venice, and sent envoys thither to go into the accounts. But the haughty Queen of the Adriatic refused to show any accounts, or to submit the matter to any arbiters. Their only reply was, says Villani, "*ego volo, ego jubeo*, that is to say, Messer Doge of Venice and the Venetians choose to have it so! Such was the disloyalty of Venice to our Commonwealth."

But the reverses and misfortunes which the Florentines were doomed to suffer in consequence of their inordinate desire to possess Lucca were not yet at an end.

In February, 1341, Francesco Castracane, encouraged and assisted by the Pisans, made another attempt to recover the lordship of Lucca. But Messer Guglielmo Canacci, Mastino della Scala's Vicar there, repulsed him, "since it pleased God to reserve Lucca to be a source of

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infinite loss and shame to the Florentines."* And in truth the lust of conquest and "annexation" has rarely been so exemplarily punished as was the Florentine greed of dominion by the strangely continuous series of disasters which attended their attempts on Lucca. A.D. 1341.

In the July of that same year, the Signory appointed a commission to treat once more with Mastino della Scala for the purchase of Lucca. It would seem that he had been giving both the Florentines and the Pisans to understand that he was disposed to sell it, and endeavouring to induce them to bid against each other. It must have been abundantly clear, however, to both parties, that whichever bought the city would have to fight with the other for the possession of it. Yet, under these circumstances, the government of Florence created a board of twenty citizens for the negotiation of the purchase, with powers so outrageously and monstrously excessive, that it is difficult to attribute so extraordinary a piece of administrative despotism wholly to a desire, however desperate, for the attainment of the ostensible object. Villani hints very clearly there were other and corrupt objects in view. And it may be observed, that at no time in the history of the Commonwealth was the government so closely monopolized by a small oligarchy of the *popolani grassi*, or rich bourgeoisie, as at that under consideration; nor until we arrive at the times of despotism, was it ever conducted more disastrously.

The twenty citizens, to whom were granted the exorbitant and dangerous powers about to be described, were all of the above-mentioned class; and some among them were absolutely in office. They were authorized to raise money on the credit of the Commonwealth in any manner that might seem expedient to them. No mention is made of

* Villani, book xi. chap. cxxiv.

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A.D. 1341. any limit to their powers in this respect. They were empowered to make war and peace, on behalf of the Commonwealth, wholly at their own discretion; to make any inroads into hostile territory they might think fit, and to form alliance and league with any foreign power they pleased. These powers were granted for a year; and it was especially provided that they were never to be called to account in any way for their use of them, let it be what it might;—"a measure," says Villani, as he well might, "which turned to the confusion and danger of our Commonwealth."

It is to be remembered, as the historian points out, that Lucca was no longer what it had been, when offered to Florence for 80,000 florins a few years previously. The city had since that time suffered severely from repeated attacks and warfare in its streets, so as to be half destroyed. The surrounding territory had been ravaged and laid waste. And worst of all, at the very time of concluding the purchase, the city was beleaguered by a Pisan army; so that Florence would have to fight her way, even to take possession of her purchase. Yet, under all these circumstances, the board of twenty concluded a bargain with Mastino della Scala for 250,000 golden florins! Fifty hostages were sent to Ferrara as sureties for the completion of the contract, where they lived for two months and a half in great style, with an hundred and fifty horses at their disposition, and a retinue of servants in livery, at a vast expense;—all which, as the historian represents it, seems to have been merely a job, to give the *jeunesse dorée* of the party an outing at the public cost. And then to complete this precious bargain, the all-powerful and irresponsible twenty scourged the city with forced loans and special imposts for the war with Pisa, which was necessary before they could get possession of their bargain.

Every effort was made to get together a powerful army;

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and in the summer of 1341, the Florentine troops marched against the Pisan forces before Lucca with 3600 cavaliers, and more than 10,000 infantry. But the evil influence of the twenty had not spent itself. Not choosing to give the command of this large army to any leader of rank and note, who might not be entirely under their own control, they named as general-in-chief a simple knight, who was in the service of the Commonwealth, as captain of the guard in the territory round the city;—a worthy man enough, says Villani, but wholly incompetent to command such an army. The result was, that the Florentine forces were entirely defeated on the 2nd of October, 1341. A.D. 1341.

Still determined not to abandon their object, the Florentines sent to King Robert of Naples for assistance; and in reply received a proposal that Lucca should be given up to him; and that he would then send such a force as should effectually punish the Pisans. Villani asserts that the king never supposed that the Florentines would assent to such a demand; and that it was only made with the intention of making the refusal of it an excuse for not sending them any assistance. If that were so, he was mistaken in his calculations. For the Florentines, doubtful apparently of being able to make good their own claim against the Pisans, and considering that at all events it was a great point gained to prevent Lucca from falling into the hands of those feared and hated rivals, closed with the proposal. But in reality King Robert "the Wise," deserved that title too well to have any desire for embarking in such an enterprise, or indeed for acquiring a possession, which would have launched him on an ocean of such stormy waters. However the Signory at once executed their part of the bargain, formally making over the city of Lucca to the King of Naples, "with sealed papers" executed in all proper legal form. And the king's agents notified the fact to the Pisan government, and bade them

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A.D. 1341. forthwith recall their army, and give up to his majesty a city now his property. But the Pisans believing that there was more virtue in actual possession, and in pikes and cross-bows, than in "sealed papers," declined to do anything of the sort.

The intensity of the anger in Florence against King Robert, who could not be induced to take any active steps in the matter, and the desperate state of irritation and rage to which the citizens had been worked up by all this long series of miscarriages, blunders, enormous costs, and failures, may be measured by a step which was meditated, and indeed partly taken by Florence, though the better sense of the community on more mature reflection recoiled from it. This was nothing less than an appeal and invitation to the Emperor, "the Bavarian," whom Florence had so cordially hated and despised, and to whose ejection from Italy she had contributed so much. Two leading members of the Signory went in all secrecy to Germany to sound Louis on the subject. He jumped at the proposal; and instantly sent back an embassy composed of some of the chief barons of his court with his great seal, promising that if only Florence would receive his Vicar within her walls, all the Germans in the Pisan host should, at once, on that seal being shown to them, leave the Pisan standard, range themselves under that of Florence, and sweep Pisa into the Tuscan sea if desired.

The temptation was very great. Pisa, the feared enemy and detested rival, humbled for ever! Lucca clutched at last after so many years of ardent longing, and ever-baffled striving, and disappointment. No community, probably, ever desired anything more eagerly and unanimously than Florence did at that time to possess Lucca. The temptation was terribly strong. And there stood the tempter with the great seal in his hand,—the magic talisman that was to work all this fulfilment of the ambition and gratifi-

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cation of the passions of years,—ready at a word to prove its virtues. Just a little word! a signature at the foot of a deed admitting the Imperial Vicar as governor of Florence,—a mere form! And there should be the most ample guarantees; there should be really nothing that Florence could object to. Only just sign the bond; and the seal and all the wonders it could work were theirs! But it was the soul of Florence that the tempter was urging her to barter for his aid; the soul that had animated her during the whole course of her existence,—that had guided and ruled her conduct from the first breath of her social life till now,—the mainspring of her being, by virtue of which she was what she was, and without which she would have at once become the dead putrescent body,—which, at a later period, when that soul was dead, she in fact became. And Florence bethought herself in time, that it was in truth nothing less than her soul that was demanded of her, as the price of the gratification she longed for. A.D. 1341.

But men have signed away their souls on smaller temptation. And the Signory held a long and secret council to decide on the answer that should be made to the German ambassadors. We have no account of the debates of that anxious and momentous sitting. But when the Signory came out from it, the star of Florence had triumphed. Principle had vanquished passion. The cost of the prize within their reach had been deemed too great. The disappointed envoys, with their grand seal in their hands, were sent back to Germany. And Florence determined to gird up her loins for another contest, and fight out her own battle with Pisa, as best she might.*

* Villani, book xi. chaps. cxxxiv—viii.



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## CHAPTER IV.

New expedition against Pisa—Walter de Brienne, Duke of Athens—Made Lord and General of Florence—Takes up his quarters at Santa Croce—His severities—His policy in Florence—Calls a parliament of the citizens—The Signory negociate with him—Place of meeting changed to the great Piazza—Scene in the Piazza on the 8th of September, 1342—The Duke of Athens proclaimed Lord of Florence for life—Tumult in the city—Signory turned out of the Palazzo Pubblico—The Duke's creatures—His troops—Takes measures very offensive to the Florentines—The Duke appoints new Priors—Gives offence to the nobles—Fortifies the Palazzo Pubblico—Repudiates the public debt—Imposes new taxes—His immense extortions—Reign of terror in Florence—Outrages on women—Market for mercenary troops in Italy—The Duke reduces the government to a pure despotism—Numerous conspiracies against him—Conspirators arrested—Massacre of citizens planned by the Duke—Florence rises against the tyrant—The city sends for assistance from Perugia and Siena—Declines aid from Pisa—Tumult in the city—The Duke's men-at-arms overpowered—Citizens in favour of the Duke overborne by the majority—Palace of the Podestà sacked—The Duke, and his Burgundian troops, with Guglielmo di Assisi, his son, and Cerretiere Visdomini, shut up in the Palazzo—Antonio Baldinaccio knighted by the Duke—A provisional Government named of fourteen citizens—Creatures of the Duke put to death—Negociation between the people and the Duke—The Duke abdicates—Guglielmo di Assisi, and his son, torn to pieces by the people—Cerretiere Visdomini escapes—Count Simon of Battifolle escorts the Duke out of the city—Takes him to Poppi—There he refuses to sign the ratification of his abdication:—till Count Simon threatens to take him back to Florence—The Duke rides with his troops to Venice—There cheats them of their pay—and escapes to his own fiefs in the kingdom of Naples.

On the 25th of March, 1342, Florence sent forth a new army against the Pisans encamped before Lucca, which met with no better fate than that which had preceded it. "The rulers of Florence," says Villani,* "did not recollect

* Book xi. chap. cxl.

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what Lucan writes of Cæsar; how that when he made war he did not say to his armies, 'Go!' but 'Come!'—and how while such was their practice the Romans were always victorious. And accordingly the contrary happens to the governors and rulers of states, when they do not lead their armies in person, but commit them to the care and discretion of foreign hired captains." In truth, the conduct of this new expedition seems to have been nothing but a series of blunders from first to last, which might well inspire the reflection with which the historian opens his account of the unfortunate campaign. His remark, though it does not go to the root, nor embrace the whole extent of the mischief, yet embodies a truth, which it would have been well for Florence if she could have laid to heart. But even this partial vision of the truth seems to have been revealed to the historian by only a fitful gleam of mental light. For when he comes to record the final miscarriage, which surrendered Lucca to the Pisans on the 6th of July, 1342, he recurs to his ordinary theory; observing, that the misfortune was imputable to bad generalship, "*or rather* to the judgment of God, intended to abase the proud and greedy ingratitude of the Florentines and their rulers." * A.D. 1342.

The captain-general, who had shown himself so manifestly incompetent, was one of the Malatesta family, lords of Rimini. Of course, on the return of the army from its unsuccessful and inglorious campaign, he was cashiered by the Florentines; who sought to improve matters, as usual, only by hiring another foreign servant, and entrusting him with power, which enabled him to become their master.

The Frenchman, Walter de Brienne, calling himself Duke of Athens, by reason of his descent from somebody who had some sort of claim to that title, but who, so far from

* Book xi. chap. cxl.



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A.D. 1342. possessing any dukedom, was a mere vagabond adventurer —"*viandante e pellegrino*," as Villani says,*—was selected by the Florentines on this occasion, and in the beginning of June, 1342, was inducted into the office of captain and protector of the people. The time for which Malatesta was hired did not expire till the end of July; so that the new servant could not step into the place of military commandant till that time. But at that date he was made military generalissimo also, with the same wages and perquisites which had been given to his predecessor. Being, however, "very humble," he declined to take up his abode in the *palazzo pubblico*, and went to lodge in the comparatively remote obscurity of the Franciscan convent of Santa Croce. Still it did not escape the notice of the Florentine gossips and quidnuncs, that their new captain-general received a great many visits, not only in the day-time, but by night also, and was continually closeted with men, who did not enjoy the reputation of being particularly well affected to the popular constitution of Florence. Nevertheless, the Signory gave the new comer full power over the property and lives of the citizens both within and without the walls. It was true they knew nothing of the man to whom they entrusted such a tremendous power. But at least he was not one of themselves. That was the great point. And each man hoped that the fearful power thus put into the hand of a stranger might be so influenced that it should strike or spare as if the hand were his own.

Within a month or two after entering on his office, the new ruler began to show symptoms of his stern love for rigid justice. Several notable citizens were seized and summarily put to death on various charges of malversation in the offices they had held. It was impossible to suppose that the stranger governor had had any hatred or enmity

* Book xii. chap. i.

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against men he had hardly ever heard of. And, on the other hand, it hardly seemed to be imposed upon him by the duties of his office to make inquisition into bygone matters, which had passed long before his term of office. There were men, however, in the city, who, as was well known, would be glad of an opportunity, of whatever kind, to be rid of the citizens who were thus the victims of the new captain's justice. And it was thought that there was a suspicious intimacy between these men and the dictator. Many other accused criminals were merely fined; and in these cases the conduct of the new ruler was more clear and intelligible. It was perhaps a yet worse symptom of the state of feeling in Florence, that the *popolo minuto*—the populace, who were day by day becoming an element more influential and more troublesome in the city,—much applauded these acts of severity against the wearers of scarlet gowns, and dwellers in palaces. As yet the tyrant was only switching off the tops of the highest flowers; and when he rode through the streets, the mob cried "Long live the new Lord!" * A.D. 1342.

The ostentatious humility which had characterised the first steps of Walter de Brienne in his new office did not last long. Whether the game for the very high stakes, which he now determined on playing, had been contemplated by him when first fortune threw in the path of his errant adventurous life the great chance, which the needs of the Florentine Commonwealth offered to him, may be doubted. The probability is that he was encouraged to play the great game by the experience of the state of feeling and parties in the city, which the first few months of his office were sufficient to afford him. It has been seen that the singular series of reverses and misfortunes, which had befallen the Commonwealth during the last ten years,

* Villani, book xii. chap. iii.

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A.D. 1342. had been mainly due to the certainly very incompetent, and probably very corrupt government of a wealthy burgher oligarchy. The gross mismanagement, and strongly suspected jobbery of those irresponsible twenty dictators, had during the last twelve months more than ever disgusted the citizens, and rendered them disaffected towards the present order of things. The chance in the French adventurer's favour, therefore, lay in the possibility of availing himself of this class animosity, by making himself the champion of the "*grandi*" and the "*popolo minuto*" against the "*popolani grassi.*" And this he had already to a certain degree accomplished by striking down certain obnoxious men of the latter class; by personal negotiation and intrigue and secret understanding with the nobles; and by the easy arts of cheap popularity-hunting with the populace.

In the September of that same year, 1342, about three months after his induction into his office, he thought the time was come when he might venture to make an important move. On the 7th of that month, the eve of the great festival of the Nativity of the Virgin, he published by public criers throughout the city, an invitation to the citizens to assemble on the morrow "in parliament," —in a monster meeting, to use the language of our own day,—on the Piazza of Santa Croce, to take into consideration matters pertaining to the welfare of the Commonwealth. The Signory, who knew only too well what this meant, but who were conscious that they were not strong enough in the city to prevent the meeting, determined on an attempt to come to terms with the dangerous man, the rash appointment of whom they already too late must have so bitterly repented. On the evening of that day several of the Priors went quietly to Santa Croce and had an interview with the Duke, which lasted far into the night. At length it was agreed between them

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that the Signory of the city should be given to De Brienne for one year, in addition to the term for which he had been already appointed; that the terms of his service should be in all respects the same as those which had been established between the Commonwealth and the Duke of Calabria; and that he should make solemn oath not to infringe in anywise the liberties of the people, or the established constitution of the Priors, Gonfaloniere, and Council of Twelve, or the *Ordini della Giustizia*. The oath was formally taken, and the terms agreed on drawn up and duly executed before notary public in the course of that night. And it was arranged that the place of the meeting to which the citizens had been called, should be changed to the *Piazza della Signoria*, in front of the *Palazzo Pubblico*, and that it should assume the form of an assembly held under the authority and presidency of the Priors for the announcement and ratification of the above arrangement. A.D. 1342

The very first proceedings on the next morning, however, must have been ominous to the government, of the vanity of attempting to stem the torrent which was setting in upon them by oaths and documents and notaries public. The Gonfaloniere and Priors were duly assembled in the *Palazzo Pubblico*, awaiting the hour for which the meeting had been appointed. An "*arringo*," * or hustings,

* The word "*arringo*,"—our "harangue,"—is one of those which curiously mark the progress of society. Its original sense was "lists" for tilting, tournaments, or such like amusements. But when popular assemblages began to occupy themselves less with bodily and more with mental jousting, the *arringo* which was prepared for the former purposes was often found convenient for those of public speaking and "haranguing." The common dictionaries tell you that "*arringo*" means an harangue. But passages are to be found in the old authors, in which a space of time is described as having been equal to two or three "*arringhe*" of a horse, that is to say, galloping from one end of the lists to the other; a phrase which, as no honourable gentleman need be informed, would be considerably misunderstood, if it were supposed to refer to three "harangues."

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A.D. 1342. had been prepared in the piazza, with due places of honour for the priors, and for the captain-general by their side, who was coming, as the worthy citizens flattered themselves, to renew his oath of last night, and accept at their hands the generous conditions agreed upon in legal and peaceable guise. But there must have been sad misgiving among those reverend signors, the civic magnates of the honourable companies of dyers, scriveners, and woolstaplers, when with a dreadful clatter of hoofs on the flagstone pavement of the piazza, my Lord Duke came riding from Santa Croce, with an hundred and twenty armed followers of his own at his back, and a great concourse of the most turbulent and disaffected nobles in the city accompanying him. There were anxious faces, pale enough probably some of them, looking out from Arnolfo di Lapo's beautiful windows on the lofty first floor of that magnificent *palazzo*, as rank after rank of armed and most uncivic-looking troopers filed into the square, which gradually became filled also with masses of the discontented "*popolo minuto*," every man of them with arms in his hand, not carrying them openly, but hidden more or less carefully beneath his clothes. The woolcombers are mentioned specially as having mustered in strong force.

Truly a very unpleasant out-look for those "fat citizens," who found themselves at the helm when such a storm was brewing.

There was nothing for it, however, but to go down into the square and take the places prepared for them on the hustings. Possibly the captain-general had brought all these armed men with him merely for the vanity of display. Possibly the people are there merely to see the sight. Our Florentines, we know, never miss an opportunity for making holiday on such occasions. Messer Podestà, however, has seen the gleam of arms under some of those shabby cloaks. Here and there an evil-disposed

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fellow, perhaps! At all events we must go down! Let our captain of the Priors' Guard have his men on the alert, and look to the doors of the palace. Messer Podestà in his scarlet gown should head the procession. But Messer Podestà, as a foreigner, seems inclined to wash his hands of the business. Nay, 'tis for Messer Gonfaloniere to lead the way! Rank has its duties as well as its privileges. A.D. 1342.

So the frightened Signory come forth from their palace into the crowded square, headed by their Gonfaloniere with his banner bearing the red Giglio on a white field, and proceed to their places on the hustings. And my Lord Duke condescends to dismount and take his place by their side. Things look a little better! A false alarm, then, after all! How easily some of our worthy colleagues are frightened at a few troopers! So Messer Francesco Rustichelli, one of the priors, a lawyer by profession, and member of the company of scriveners,* got up to open the proceedings in a speech. I do not find it specially recorded, that the voice of the worshipful Messer Priore was unusually shaky on the occasion; but have little doubt that such was the case.

He had no opportunity, however, of trying it at any great length. For he had spoken only a few words, when a cry arose from the populace in the more distant part of the square, among whom several of the retainers of the great families had mingled, "Let the Lordship be for life! Ay! Ay! For life! The Duke is Lord for life! We will have the Duke for our Lord!" The cry was at once taken up, and became general. And the nobles dismounting from their horses, and pressing forwards to the hustings, surrounded the Duke and bore him among them

* The Florentine name of the incorporated guild of the legal profession, was that of the "Judges." But the idea conveyed to English ears by that term is less like the thing meant, than the idea conveyed by the word used in the text.

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A.D. 1342. towards the door of the palace.* The captain of the Priors' Guard, at the first appearance of tumult, had closed and barred the doors, but took no further steps for the defence of the palace. Finding the great gates shut, there was a cry for axes; and a few of the thousand brawny arms eager for such an exciting job, soon forced a way into the noble building; and the Duke was speedily installed in the hall of state occupied by the Priors. Some among the nobles instantly seized and made away with the *Gonfalone* of the Commonwealth, and the Book of the *Ordini della Giustizia*, the never-forgotten object of the intense hatred and aversion of their Order. The banner of the Duke was raised on the tower of the palace, and the bells set ringing peal on peal.

But still more significant doings followed. Not only was the new Captain-General to be thrust in, but the constitutional authorities were to be thrust out. The Gonfaloniere and Priors were told, to their infinite indignation and disgust, that they might establish themselves in the hall which had been used as an outer guard-room. The state-rooms and all the habitable portions of the palace of the Commonwealth were needed for the accommodation of my Lord Duke. And this was only a preparatory step for turning out the Priors altogether. On the third day after the scene which has been described, the *Signoria* were told to move themselves into a private house, where they were established with a studied absence of all state, or outward signs of dignity or authority, which they very soon found to typify correctly the entire nullity and powerless insignificance to which they were reduced.

On the evening of the day on which this *coup d'état* was accomplished, there were illuminations and bonfires;

* Cronaca Sanese. Muratori Rev. Ital. Script. tom. cv.

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and Florence made rejoicings as if some great good had befallen her! The *Capitano del Popolo,* Guglielmo d'Assisi, whose office expressly required him to raise and put himself at the head of the people in case of any danger to the constitutional liberties of the Commonwealth, took part with the usurper, and accepted office under him, as his head gaoler and executioner. Messer Meliaduso d'Ascoli, the Podestà, pretended to disapprove of the usurpation, and resigned his office. But it was only to accept other functions under the Duke. On the very morning of his tumultuous entry into the palace, in the manner we have seen, he knighted Messer Cerretiere de' Visdomini, whose name became such a byword of hatred and scorn in Florence, that it is even to the present day infamous among all classes of the population. This man was the Duke's shieldbearer and especial confidant, and became the main instrument and counsellor of his subsequent oppression and tyranny. He also at the same time knighted Giotto di Sangemimano, the captain of the Priors' Guard;—circumstances which proved, if proof had been needed, that the whole plot had been arranged beforehand, and the result determined on, even when the Frenchman had been solemnly swearing to respect and maintain the constituted authorities of the city. A.D. 1342.

It would seem that the mode in which Walter de Brienne had been made Lord of Florence, and the ease with which he had slipped the yoke of despotism on to the neck of the people, had led him to form a very contemptuous opinion of them; and to imagine, that the force of some three or four hundred Burgundian men-at-arms, which he had in the town, was sufficient to enable him to do absolutely what he pleased with the citizens and their city. The most ordinary prudence would have taught him that many of the steps, which he at once proceeded to take, were precisely such as the Florentines were the

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A.D. 1342. least likely to endure. The main object for which he had been appointed and invested with such exorbitant powers, was to gratify the longing of the city for the humiliation of Pisa, and the acquisition of Lucca. But one of the first things the Duke did, was to make peace with the former city, assuring to it, for fifteen years to come, the possession of Lucca, which, at the expiration of that term, was to return to the condition of a free and independent republic. Despite the eight thousand golden florins, which Pisa engaged to pay him "every year on St. John's day in a cup of gilt silver," the Duke would hardly have ventured on this step, if he had at all rightly understood the feeling and character of the people he had to deal with. He did not comprehend that, despite the mutual jealousies and hatred, which he saw dividing class from class in Florence, the Commonwealth was united as one man in its enmity to Pisa, and in its ambition to rule Lucca. His plan was to obtain the means of keeping down the nobles and the upper classes of the citizens by paying court to the populace. And he was not aware, that there was not one of those sturdy woolcombers, who had helped him to seize the supreme power in the State, to whom peace with Pisa, and abandonment of the hope of possessing Lucca, were not as bitter, and very probably more so, than to any noble in the city.

On the 15th of October that year the Duke appointed new Priors, most of them from the lower guilds—the *Arti Minori*—which had hitherto been excluded from the Priorate. But even this measure, which of course was gall and wormwood to the "*popolani grassi*," of the superior guilds, was made less acceptable even to the minor guilds, which profited by it, by the admixture among the new Priors of men "whose forefathers had been Ghibellines."* And here again, in all probability,

* Villani, book xii. chap. viii.

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the Frenchman did not at all understand the feeling he was offending. Nor is it likely that he guessed how greatly the favour he was granting to the populace was neutralized by his causing the new Signory to be inducted into office "with small ceremony, and without any ringing of bells or assemblage of the people according to custom."* At the same time he incurred the bitter hostility of the nobles, who found themselves disappointed in their expectations, that he would entirely destroy all form of popular government, as he had in fact promised them that he would do. A.D. 1342.

Still more were the whole body of the nobles indignant, when the Duke fined one of the Bardi five hundred golden florins, to be paid under pain of losing his head, merely for having strangled a man of the people, who was impertinent to him.

Then again he offended all classes of the citizens by commencing extensive works and alterations for the conversion of their Public Palace of the Commonwealth into a strong and defensible fortress. He seized on all the materials which had been collected for the reconstruction of the *Ponte Vecchio*, and employed them and the workmen engaged on the bridge for this purpose. He pulled down several buildings around the palace to obtain space for these new fortifications; and turned out the inhabitants of others in the immediate neighbourhood, that he might fill them with his armed men; and yet "paid no rent for the same."

Having thus fortified his position, and conceiving himself strong enough to resist any rising of the city against him, he began to venture on yet more flagrant acts of illegality and tyranny. It will be remembered that certain portions of the revenues of the city had been mortgaged to

* Villani, book xii. chap. viii.

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A.D. 1342. the citizens who had supplied the means for carrying on the war in Lombardy. All these claims he disallowed and repudiated, causing the entire ruin of several families, and utterly destroying all confidence and the foundations of the public credit. The spoil turned into his own coffers from this source alone was at the rate of 200,000 golden florins a year. He imposed new taxes of all kinds, and forced contributions on all sorts of pretexts, to such an extent, that in the course of ten months and eighteen days, which was the duration of his intolerable tyranny, he plundered Florence of the enormous sum of 400,000 golden florins, the greater part of which he transmitted to France and the kingdom of Naples.

Within little more than a month from the induction of this Frenchman into his office, the Florentines found themselves living under an absolute despotism, which rapidly deepened into a reign of terror. Of course the tyrant lived in perpetual dread of conspiracy and insurrection. And every shadow of suspicion was followed by immediate condemnations to the axe or the gallows. In many cases horrible and strange tortures were inflicted on the victims of the Duke's anger before the revolted eyes of the Florentines. In one case a mere idle word was punished by cutting out from its roots the tongue of the speaker, who died in his agony while the offending member was paraded on the point of a lance through the city. In two other cases, persons who thought to curry favour with the tyrant by revealing to him plots against him, were instantly sent off by him to execution;—for malignant falsehood, if their revelations were not true;—for having cognizance of such facts, if they were. One of these unfortunates was paraded through the streets on a car, while his flesh was torn from his bones by pincers as he went. The mangled but still living body was then dragged at a horse's tail

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from the Piazza * to the gallows, where he was at length put out of his misery. A.D. 1342.

That nothing might be wanting to fill the cup of the popular indignation to overflowing, that last outrage, which has been fatal to so many oppressors, who have subdued their victims to the point of enduring all else,—that most unpardonable wrong, which no people still retaining in them any tincture of the better qualities of humanity ever forgave, and of which alone it may be said that Virtue herself does not counsel its pardon,—outrage to the feelings and persons of the wives and daughters of the citizens was added to the long account.

The method of the tyrant's government was a simple one,—that of pure absolutism, resting solely on military force. He had increased the three hundred men-at-arms, whom he brought with him at his first coming, to eight hundred mercenaries, mostly from the north of the Alps, hired in the usual markets for such commodities, which were kept ever well supplied during that and the following century in reply to the constant demands of the princelings of Italy, who not only used them for the subjection of their own people, but drove a brisk trade as dealers in and brokers of the commodity. The great commercial cities, too, became constant customers in the same markets from the time when commercial so wholly superseded military habits and pursuits, that they could or would no longer fight their own battles. These bodies dealt sometimes on their own account with the free-lance captains, and sometimes with the fighting prince of some neighbouring principality, who got his living by speculating in the article

* In all Florentine writers, "*the* Piazza" means that in front of the Palazzo Pubblico, which is the heart and centre of the city. It was at different epochs called, La Piazza della Signoria,—La Piazza del Popolo,—La Piazza del Granduca. It is now once again, "La Piazza della Signoria."

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A.D. 1342. and by attending wars and sieges with his troopers, just as a contracting confectioner brings his attendants to a festivity, or an undertaker his mourners to a funeral. And it is curious to find that one of the complaints made against the Duke of Athens by the Florentines was, that he performed his contract shabbily in this respect, from motives of avarice;—that eight hundred horsemen was a beggarly allowance for the handsome wages allowed, and that he ought to have kept a much larger force in pay. Yet these mercenary troops, who were of course equally ready to harry a homestead, carry off a woman, or hang a citizen, at the bidding of their leader, as to engage in any of the more legitimate operations of warfare, were the only means to which the tyrant looked for the support of his power, amid a population, which was, as he well knew, hostile to him.

The Priori were still in existence, and were appointed every two months as usual. But they were entirely powerless, and excluded from even the appearance of influence on the government. The Podestà, Messer Baglioni de' Baglioni of Perugia, was a creature of the Duke. Messer Guglielmo d' Assisi, his "*Conservatore*," as he was called, should rather, as Villani says, have been called his hired bravo and assassin. He named three judges for ordinary affairs, who decided summarily, and who were, Villani assures us, as grossly corrupt as they might under such circumstances be expected to be. His counsel consisted of a certain judge from Lecce, in the kingdom of Naples, which was the Duke's hereditary fief, of his Chancellor Francesco, Bishop of Assisi, brother of the *Conservatore*, of the Bishops of Arezzo, Pistoia, and Volterra, and of Messer Ottaviano de' Belforti of Volterra. The bishops, says Villani, he employed from hypocrisy. At all events, which is more to the purpose, there was not a single Florentine in the counsel. His real advisers and

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the ministers of his will however were Messer Baglione, A.D. 1342.
Messer Guglielmo d' Assisi, and Messer Cerretiere de' Visdomini, "men broken in to wickedness of every description after his own fashion." He made no pretence of giving any appearance of legality to his acts; but governed by rescripts under his hand and seal, which his Chancellor put into execution. And this was the government, which at a day's notice was to supersede a complicated system of jealous checks and divided powers, and continually recurring popular elections, of every functionary having authority in the republic. And this Frenchman absolutely imagined, that by the brute force of eight hundred hired bravos he could continue so to hold Florence in his clutch, as to divert all the revenues of the State to his own pocket, while he irritated in every way the national sentiment and pride of the people, and worked his lawless will on the lives and persons of the inhabitants! He made alliances, it is true, with several of the neighbouring despots. But their aid stood him in small stead. "More useful to him would have been the friendship and goodwill of the citizens of Florence," says Villani; "but that he had entirely forfeited and lost. And that of the tyrants with whom he leagued himself was of little avail to him in his need."

At the end of about three weeks, according to Villani, the Duke of Athens had already become hateful to all classes, and well-nigh to every individual in the city. Yet his despotism, ever of course increasing in violence and cruelty as he read that hatred in the eyes of every face he saw, and felt the danger of his position, endured nearly six months longer. It is wonderful that it should have lasted so long. And nothing save the state of division and mutual jealousy, which existed in the city, can explain the long-suffering of a people so little wont to endure. Conspiracies against him were rife in the city. But each



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A.D. 1343. one of these was confined to a small knot of individuals far too powerless to attempt to act by open violence; and the precautions of the tyrant were too unceasing to allow any opportunity of surprising him. Three such conspiracies, as was afterwards known, had been for some time in existence, each wholly unknown to those engaged in the others. The first was headed by the Bishop of Florence, a Dominican of the family of the Acciaiuoli, and consisted chiefly of nobles, in great part of the Bardi family, with some of the Frescobaldi. Their plan was to obtain aid from Pisa, Siena, and Perugia to overpower him. A second, headed by two of the Donati and several of the Neri nobles, had conceived a plan of corrupting some of the soldiers of his guard, and by that means getting access to the palace. But their attempts were twice frustrated by changes of the soldiers on guard, dictated by the tyrant's ever vigilant suspicions. To make himself yet more secure from an attack of this sort, he caused the lower windows of the *Palazzo Pubblico* to be walled up. The third conspiracy was headed by some of the Adimari, Medici, Bordoni, Oricellai, Aldobrandini, and other of the wealthy "*popolani*"; and seems to have been more numerous, and to have contained among its members a larger portion of the popular element than the others. They had ascertained that the Duke was in the habit of visiting a lady of the Bordoni family, whose palace was near the "*Croce al Trebbio*," which, as those who have visited Florence may remember, still stands at one end of the Via delle Belle Donne, behind the Piazza Santa Maria Novella. They had therefore hired a house at each end of the street, which was secretly filled with armed men, so as to render his escape from the trap thus set for him impossible. But here again the fear-inspired vigilance of the tyrant baffled the conspirators. They had imagined that the force prepared by them would have been ample

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for the purpose; knowing as they did that it had been the Duke's habit to go about in the city with twenty-five unarmed attendants. But suddenly he altered his practice in this respect, and was seen in the streets no more without an escort of fifty troopers fully armed on horseback, and an hundred soldiers on foot. And these troops were ordered to take up their station in front of the house as long as he remained in it. A.D. 1343.

The number of armed men whom it had been necessary to trust with the secret of this last conspiracy led to its discovery. One of those employed being a retainer of Messer Francesco Brunelleschi, fancied that his master was, as a matter of course, a member of the conspiracy, and under this impression, without any intention of playing the traitor, revealed it to him. But Brunelleschi, from whom all knowledge of the plot had been kept concealed, being at enmity with several of those who were concerned in it, declared the whole matter to the Duke. He forthwith arrested two of the less conspicuous chiefs of the conspiracy, and from them obtained a confession that one of the Adimari was their chief, and thereupon arrested him also. The amount of dismay and alarm which this arrest produced throughout the city, gave the Duke reason to suspect that the plot against him was much more extensive than he had imagined. Under these circumstances he feared to execute Adimari openly, as he had intended, and made up his mind that the more widely spread mischief must be met by a larger and more effectual measure of repression. He feigned, therefore, to feel great doubts as to how he should deal with the prisoner, and sent messengers to three hundred of the principal people in the city, requesting each that he would come to the palace and give his advice upon that point. But it so happened that a sufficient number of the persons thus invited spoke to each other on the subject, to arouse very strong suspicions



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A.D. 1343. on their part. Further communications made the fact evident that nearly every man of note in the city was invited to this suspicious looking council. And it was decided that no one should take any notice of the summons. It was discovered afterwards that the Duke had arranged that each man, as he arrived at the palace, should be made to enter one of those large halls on the ground floor of the building, of which, as has been mentioned, he had built up all the windows. Then, when he had got them all together, they were to have been butchered indiscriminately by his soldiers.

The immediate result of this defeated attempt at a deed which would have outdone in memorable atrocity all those similar episodes of Italian history which have occupied the pens of poets, novelists, and melodramatists from those times to the present, was to make known to all Florence that everybody in it had been for some time past secretly doing the same thing. And the discovery of this unwonted and unconscious unanimity among all classes and all parties of the people was to induce the citizens to forget for the while their factions and enmities, and to unite together against the tyrant they had all more or less contributed to set over them.

There is an old Florentine proverb, writes Villani,* which runs thus :

> " *Firenze non si muove*
> *Se tutta non si dole,*"

which, he says, though very bad rhyme, is very true, and perfectly applicable to the present case.

> " Florence never budges an inch,
> Until all over she feels the pinch."

Assuredly she had felt the pinch of Walter de Brienne's

* Book xii. chap. xvi.

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tyranny in every limb and every fibre, and the time was fully come for "moving." A.D. 1343.

It was a case, moreover, for doing quickly whatever was to be done. For the Duke had then only six hundred horse within the walls, but reinforcements were arriving rapidly. It became known, too, in the city that the Duke had, at the first appearance of the likelihood of disturbance in Florence, sent off to the Signore of Bologna for help, and that a body of Bolognese and Romagnoles were already on their way across the Apennines. The non-appearance of any of those summoned to the Duke's pretended council must have made him perfectly aware that a struggle was imminent between him and the citizens. And on their side the abandonment of all the secresy, which had hitherto rendered common action impossible, made it now impossible to defer it.

During the night between the 25th and the 26th of July, 1343, messengers were sent off in all haste to Siena, Prato, and other neighbouring towns, to ask for aid. No message was sent to Pisa, save a private one by some citizens who had friends in that city. But this private message was promptly acted on, and a considerable force immediately set forth to march towards Florence. Much, however, as Florence stood in need of help, she would not receive it from Pisa. And indeed there might be good reason for deeming it imprudent under the circumstances to admit an armed force of some five hundred Pisans into the city. So when tidings came in the midst of the struggle in Florence that the Pisans had reached Signa, and would soon be in the city, the leaders of the insurrectionary movement sent off messengers to meet them, and tell their leaders that Florence had not asked their aid and did not wish it. The inhabitants of Signa, and the surrounding villages at the same time, getting a hint of the feeling of the city towards these volunteer allies, fell on

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A.D. 1343. them and sent them back to Pisa not a little the worse for their expedition. The Sienese aid arrived in the course of the night of Sunday the 27th. Count Simone Guidi da Battifolle, of that branch of the great Guidi clan which had separated itself in old times from the rest of the Ghibelline family, and for several generations past had consistently taken part with the Commonwealth of Florence, also marched in with four hundred foot soldiers.

The city, however, was all up in arms before these bodies of troops arrived. Early in the morning of the 26th, St. Anne's day, which has ever since been far more noted in Florence as the anniversary of the rising against the Duke of Athens, than as that set apart for the veneration of St. Anne, the entire population was on foot, and the first thing done was to barricade the principal streets of the city, and especially all the entrances into the Piazza. As the main force of the Duke consisted of cavalry, it was not difficult to erect such obstructions as should make the issues of the piazza absolutely impassable to it.

In the insurrectionary movements of larger cities and of more modern times, the great difficulty which the populace has ever had to contend against has been the want of union, not in their hearts and desires, but in their action. From the impossibility of preconcerting a plan of operations, the popular masses are scattered, some making for one point of action and some for another, and all being uncertain *where* to betake themselves for the more effectual furtherance of the work in hand. But no such difficulty existed in old Florence. It needed no previous arrangement to direct every Florentine citizen of whatever class to THE PIAZZA in time of tumult and popular rising. The old civic vitality concentrated itself there, and issued forth thence, as surely and naturally as the life-blood flows to and from the heart. The analogy is a perfect one. *The* Piazza was essentially the heart of the Italian civic com-

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monwealth. It was there that wounds fatal to the system could be inflicted; it was there that the life-energies of the body politic gathered themselves for the last efforts of resistance. A.D. 1343.

The whole population of Florence on that Saturday morning, of the 26th of July, were hurrying by converging routes to the Piazza. It was already occupied,—had probably been occupied all night,—by three hundred of the Duke's mounted men-at-arms. And all those who were thronging in from the different approaches, like rising waters rushing from various stream-channels into a central whirlpool, were not in the first instance inimical to the tyrant. A few of the great *popolano* families,—the Peruzzi, the Cavalcanti, the Acciaiuoli, the Antellesi,—together with the "*minuto popolo*" of the butchers and the woolcombers, endeavoured to get up a cry in favour of the Duke. But seeing that they were altogether outnumbered, and that the general sense of the city was against them, they gave up the attempt, and joined themselves with the rest of the citizens. Messer Gianozzo Cavalcanti mounted on a high bench in front of the Cavalcanti palace, and strove to turn the current that was rushing to the Piazza. "Cry, Hurrah for the Duke! For his troops all armed are in possession of the Piazza! Don't go there! Keep away, or you are dead men every one of you!" But the crowd hurried past him and paid no attention to his words.

Meantime fighting had begun in the Piazza between the mob and the three hundred of the Duke's men-at-arms. But the advantage was all on the side of the populace; for the troopers were assailed with a continuous shower of brickbats and stones from the roof of every house around the Piazza, and of cross-bow bolts from the windows. A few were killed; but the majority of them, seeing that all hope of quelling the disturbance was out of the question,

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A.D. 1343. abandoned their horses and arms to the crowd, and escaped into the palace. That part of the Duke's troopers who had not been in the Piazza fared worse. For most of them were killed as they endeavoured to make their way thither, and the rest, dismounted, disarmed, and plundered of everything they possessed, escaped with difficulty in the confusion. As soon as the people saw that the Piazza was in their own power, and the Duke, as it were, besieged in the palace, a portion of them ran to the palace of Messer Baglione, the Podestà. He, however, escaped with his family, and took refuge in Santa Croce. But the people sacked and absolutely gutted his residence, specially burning all the archives, and records of condemnation, to fines and exile.

No other robbery, or outrage to property or person, save to the creatures of the Duke, was done in Florence; which, as Villani remarks, was a notable thing, considering the time of license, the utter confusion which reigned in the city, and the entire absence of all control over the populace.

At nightfall the city was entirely in the hands of the people; and the Duke remained shut up in the palace. The Priors also were in the building, for they had taken refuge there at the first outbreak of the tumult, and were now prisoners with the rest of those within the walls. There were also with the Duke the "*Conservatore*" Guglielmo d'Assisi and his son, a youth of eighteen, and the Duke's counsellor and friend Cerretiere Visdomini. Besides these and the ordinary inmates of the palace there were the greater part of the three hundred Burgundian soldiers who had escaped from the Piazza into the palace. In all, there were more than four hundred individuals; and with the exception of a small quantity of biscuit and wine, there was no food in the building. It became clear, therefore, that the present position of things could not endure long.

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Early on the Sunday morning the Duke, beginning to perceive that the matter was more serious than he had supposed, called the Priors to him, to consult what was best to be done. They advised him immediately to release those who had been arrested in consequence of the discovery of the third of the conspiracies that have been mentioned. This he not only consented to do forthwith, but offered to knight Messer Antonio Baldinaccio, the chief among them. Messer Antonio refused to take knighthood from such hands. But the Priori persuaded him to yield, for the good of the public; and he did so. Furthermore the Duke hauled down his own ensign, and hoisted on the tower of the palace that of the Commonwealth. But neither one nor the other of these concessions produced the smallest effect upon the people, who had completely made up their minds to have done with the Duke. A.D. 1313.

On the Sunday night four hundred citizen soldiers from Siena marched into the city; and with them ambassadors sent by the Commune of Siena, discreet and experienced men, who took a useful part in the management of the events which followed. On the Monday morning a general meeting of the citizens was called in the cathedral; the result of which was the nomination of fourteen citizens, seven nobles, and seven *popolani*, with full powers to "reform" the government of Florence according to the best of their judgment;—their authority to come to an end at the close of the ensuing September. It is worthy of remark that Messer Gianozzo Cavalcanti, whom we have seen striving to create a reaction in favour of the Duke, and Messer Simone Peruzzi, who had taken part in that attempt, were both named members of this commission. Whence it would seem that an unwonted spirit of moderation and conciliation, born of the great evils from which the city was escaping, presided over the choice of the

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A.D. 1343. plenipotentiaries. It was indeed already much for the people to consent, that a board with such powers should consist of patricians and plebeians in equal numbers.

Notwithstanding such moderation of feeling, however, the Monday did not pass over as quietly as the Sunday had done. And if the citizens felt more tolerantly than usual towards each other, it was only because their common animosity was directed with an intensity that held all other passions in abeyance, against the creatures of the tyrant. A notary in the Duke's service, and some officers employed by the "*Conservatore,*" were discovered in the Via dei Leoni, immediately behind the Palazzo Pubblico, and instantly put to death. Messer Simone da Norcia, who was the Duke's judge of causes regarding the exchequer, and was notorious for the cruel severity and rapacity with which he administered his functions, also fell into the hands of the people, and was cut to pieces. Messer Arrigo Fei, the Superintendent of Customs, who was noted for his acuteness in discovering any frauds connected with his department, was making his escape in the disguise of a friar, but was recognised as he was passing through the gates of the city, and put to death. "The boys of the city took possession of the body, and having torn the clothes from it, dragged it through the streets to the Piazza. There the populace hung the carcase up by the heels, and quartered it as though it had been a hog." *

Meantime, during that day and the three days following, the fourteen citizens, who had been named as a provisional government, together with the Conte Simone da Battifolle, the Bishop of Florence, and the Sienese ambassadors, were endeavouring to arrange such terms between the people and the Duke as might enable them to

* Coppo Stefani, book viii. rubr. dlxxxiii.; Villani, book xii. chap. xvii.

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get him safe out of the city. The people saw with discontent the frequent coming and going of these personages between the citizens and the tyrant, who had shown mercy to no man, and who was now in their power. The Duke, on his side, had not yet given up all hope of retaining his position and power. So that, between the people who could hardly be induced to consent to his going forth alive, and the Duke, who would not consent to go at all, the negotiators, who were anxious to save his life, had a difficult part to play. At length the people were induced to agree that if the Duke would formally renounce all title and pretension to hold rule in Florence, and would deliver up to them Messer Cerretiere de' Visdomini, as well as the *Conservatore*, and his son, he should go free and unharmed out of the city. The Duke utterly refused to accept any such conditions. But the small stock of food which was in the palace had come to an end; and the Burgundian soldiers began to show signs of being inclined to take the settlement of the question into their own hands. They now declared that they had no idea of remaining there to be starved to death; and that if the Duke would not accept the terms offered, and give up the three men named, they would themselves deliver them to the people. Thus pressed, the wretched man was compelled to yield, and the miserable victims whose fate had been trembling in the balance were doomed.* A.D. 1343.

It was the evening of Friday the 1st of August when this decision was taken. Those citizens, who had lost members of their families by the block or by the rack at the hands of Messer Guglielmo d'Assisi, the *Conservatore*,

* Many of those who read these pages have doubtless seen, and none who have seen will have forgotten, the noble picture by Signor Ussi of Florence, exhibited in London in 1862, representing the moment at which the decision described in the text was taken. The scene, as presented by the artist, is accurately in accordance with historical truth.

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A.D. 1343. —Altovite, Medici, Ruccellai, and many others,—gathered together at the door of the palace, the foremost of the raging crowd that filled the Piazza. The door was partially opened, and the trembling wretch, and the youth, his son, were thrust out by the Burgundians, and the door rapidly closed again behind them. The lad came first into the hands of those who were thirsting for his blood. He was but eighteen; but the historians assure us that he was, if possible, a more detestable monster than his father; as he would be present at inflictions of torture merely for the pleasure of the sight, and would often incite the executioners to give an extra turn of the wheel for his own amusement. And now he was at the mercy of the men whose fathers and brothers he had thus treated. Before the eyes of his father, whose own fate was suspended while he was compelled to witness that of his son, he was absolutely hacked into small morsels, for which the crowd scrambled. And some carried gory fragments through the streets on points of lances, or swords, some tore the quivering flesh with their teeth, and some, with horrible madness, devoured it. So, on the authority of two contemporary witnesses,* it was done; and so therefore, however revolting the picture, it must here stand written.

The wretched father, before whose eyes this horrible scene had been enacted, was then subjected, by the still unsatiated crowd, to a similar fate.

There was a third victim, Cerretiere de' Visdomini. And the populace had insisted that he should be delivered into their hands, as the sole price at which they would consent to allow his master to escape with his life, with as much pertinacity and ferocity as they had shown with regard to the two others. It would seem, indeed, that this man was to the full equally deserving of their execration.

* Villani, book xii. chap. xvii.; Coppo Stefani, book viii. rubr. dlxxxiii.

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And had it chanced that he had been thrust out from the gate of the palace the first instead of the last of the three, he would unquestionably have suffered a similar doom. As it was, he seems to have been for the moment forgotten and overlooked by the crowd, intent on glutting their vengeance on the first two victims. He was enabled during those first minutes of mad excitement to elude the observation of those around him. And when the quick revulsion of feeling came, which was sure to follow the perpetration of the hideous excesses which have been described, none bethought them that vengeance had still to be wreaked on a third victim. Other exciting events took possession of the popular mind; and though his name, "Cerretiere," remained for many generations afterwards a word of infamy and loathing in the mouths of the Florentines, no one then thought it worth while to attempt following the wretch to the hiding-place into which he had slunk. A.D. 1343.

Notwithstanding the agreement to which the parties had come, it was likely enough, as may be easily understood, that it might prove a difficult and dangerous undertaking to get the Duke safe out of the city. This task fell to the lot of worthy Count Simon, of Battifolle, who appears throughout all this business to have acted uprightly, ably, and in a manner which secured for him the respect of all classes in the city. He was assisted by the Sienese ambassadors, whose presence as such imposed a certain degree of restraint and consideration on the people. But it was nevertheless deemed most prudent to allow time for the maddened passions of the citizens to cool down a little before making the attempt. And it was not till the 6th of August that the little convoy came out from the Palazzo Pubblico in the dead of the night, as quietly as might be, and took their way towards the St. Nicholas gate. Shrinkingly and with much fear, as the historian records, the

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A.D. 1343. deposed tyrant came forth from his shelter in the heart of the vast pile of building, which he had so vainly fortified. He had never left it since the day that he returned thither from that visit to "a lady of the Bordoni family," which led to the discovery of the Adimari and Bordoni conspiracy. There was the stalwart armed figure of Count Simon, with his small band of horsemen under the command of his nephew; there were the dignified ambassadors of Siena with their attendants, not much liking, we may guess, the night ride on which they were bound. And there was the small, ill-favoured,* mean-looking figure of the usurper,—more ill-looking than ever now, as, haggard from the conflict of contending passions, and long confinement, and present and past terror, he slunk out into the night air and mounted the horse prepared for him. They put him in the midst of the convoy, and so rode to Poppi in the Casentino, in the castle of which place the Duke, according to the terms of the agreement he had assented to, was to make a formal renunciation of all claim to any authority in Florence, the act of the city conferring on him the lordship for life notwithstanding, and to execute documents to that effect in legal form.

But when the papers were put before him he refused to sign them, still retaining a hope that by the aid of some of the other despots of Italy he might yet recover his position in Florence. Upon which "Count Simon said to him, 'you know the terms to which you have agreed, and in consideration of which I agreed to bring you safe out of Florence. Now, I shall put no constraint upon you, nor do anything to compel you to keep your word: but I will simply take you back again to Florence, and leave you to arrange the matter with the people as you think fit.' But when the Duke heard the mention of returning to Florence,

* Villani, book xii. chap. xvii.

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the idea did not please him." And he accordingly executed the renunciation required of him in all due form. A.D. 1343.

Having been joined by the remainder of the troops who had been in his pay, he rode with them to Bologna, and thence to Venice; where, privately hiring a galley, he slipped away in the night, and sailed for the southern coast of Naples, thus defrauding his men of their pay. And so characteristically concludes the career, so far as our history is concerned, of this French Duke of Athens.

In Florence, however, he was not forgotten. None of the political malefactors, who at various times incurred the indignation and hatred of the Florentine people, ever made so deep an impression on the popular mind, and attained to so enduring an infamy in their recollection, as the Duke of Athens. The more or less caricatured portrait of the tyrant was painted in fresco on the exterior wall of the Podestà's palace,—the principal among some other figures of those who had been thus immortalised as traitors to the Commonwealth. An inscription declaratory of the obliteration of his armorial bearings from the wall of one of the halls of the Podestà's palace on which they had been painted, was put up in the place of them; and when within the last few years this noble building, now more commonly known as the "Bargello," was restored and repaired, the still existing public feeling at Florence required that a new marble slab should perpetuate the fact recorded in the old inscription.

The day of St. Anne, on which the rising took place, which resulted in driving the Duke of Athens from the city, was ordered to be evermore observed in Florence with especial rejoicings; some of the annual manifestations of which are kept up even to the present day.*

* Villani, book xii. chaps. xvi. xvii.; Coppo Stefani, book viii., rubr. dlxxvii.-dlxxxv.; Ammirato, book ix.; Gonf. 305.

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## CHAPTER V.

Union of all classes in the city—Nobles are made eligible to the offices—New constitution of the city—Discontent of the populace—Rising of the populace to demand the expulsion of the nobles from the Signory—They obtain their demand—New changes in the constitution—Tumults raised by Andrea Strozzi—No Socialistic doctrines ever popular in Tuscany—The real wishes and objects of the people—Struggle between the populace and the nobles—Fighting in the streets—The nobles on the north bank of the Arno yield—Those on the south bank fight;—but are overpowered—and driven from the city—The Bardi houses sacked—Fresh modification of the constitution—Impracticability of the new arrangements—Standing of the nobles in Florence—Many noble families permitted to become plebeian—The popular government makes peace with Pisa—Banishes a few nobles—Terms of the peace with Pisa—Towns lost by Florence during the tyranny of the Duke of Athens—Famine in Florence—Provision made by the government—Appearance of pestilence in Florence—Accounts of it by Boccaccio—and by Matteo Villani—Recklessness and dissolute living to which it gave rise—Results of the mortality different from what had been anticipated—Duration of the pestilence—The Company of the "Misericordia"—Vast sums left to Florentine charities—Specially, to the Captains of "Or San Michele"—The consequences of these legacies—Florence recovers the towns and castles lost under the Duke of Athens—Robber nobles in the Apennines—The Ubaldini—Outrage committed by them—Castle of Montegemmoli taken—Giovanni Visconti Archbishop of Milan—Chief of the Ghibelline party—Purchases Bologna of Giovanni Pepoli—Robs him of the money paid for it, and puts him in prison—Collects all the Ghibelline elements in Italy for an attack on Florence—Pisa declines to join the Ghibelline league—Incapable men in power at Florence—Peace made by the interposition of Pope Clement VI.

The deliverance of the city from the intolerable tyranny of Walter de Brienne, was not the only result of the insurrection which put an end to it. The whole community, and every class of it, had combined together for their common deliverance. For once nobles and plebeians, "*popolo*

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*grasso*" and "*popolo minuto,*" had laboured together in the same spirit, and for the same object. And in the first flush of exultation at the great deliverance, all parties seemed inclined to forget their old traditional hatreds and animosities. It was impossible for the people not to feel that the nobles had contributed much towards the defeat of the tyrant, and that they had on this occasion at least shown themselves good citizens. The provisional government, to which the immediate management of the city had been entrusted, was composed, as has been mentioned, of patricians and plebeians in equal numbers; and by virtue of the powers entrusted to them, the offices of the state were thrown open to the nobles. The "*popolo minuto*" were at first opposed to their being made eligible to the "*Priorato,*" or the office of Gonfaloniere. But by the advice of the ambassadors of Siena, who had obtained much reputation in the city from their conduct during the late disturbances, this point was conceded; and the nobles were declared eligible to all the offices of the Commonwealth. It is worth noting that the opposition, which was at first made to this innovation, proceeded wholly from the "*popolo minuto,*" or populace; as the fact marks the gradual rise of that class into importance as a separate political power in the state. A.D. 1343.

It was by no means, however, intended that the nobles should stand on equal terms with the "*popolani,*" as candidates for office; as appears from the arrangements made for a new division of the city, and for the reformed constitution of the Signoria, which was connected with it. Two of the six wards into which Florence had hitherto been divided,—that consisting of the portion of the city on the left bank of the river, and that called San Pietro Scheraggio from the ancient church of that name, close to the Palazzo Pubblico,—complained that it was unjust that the government should be composed of an equal number of priors



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A.D. 1343. chosen from each of the six wards, whereas those two together paid more than half the entire revenue of the city. A fresh division was accordingly made into four quarters, "*Quartieri*," and it was settled that three Priors should be elected from each, two of them to be plebeians and one patrician. The council of assessors to the Priors was reduced from twelve to eight, two to be chosen from each quarter. And these, as well as the other less important offices, the nobles and the people were to share equally between them. But the real rulers of the Commonwealth were the "Priori;" and in that body the people, as has been seen, reserved to themselves a majority of two to one.

Nevertheless, the people were not contented. And the very first election under the new constitution showed that the utmost circumspection and moderation would be needed on the part of the nobles, if they hoped to retain their new privileges. A report was spread in the city on the eve of the new election that a member of the Donati family was to be elected as one of their Priors by the nobles. And such an election would have been perfectly legal. But the mere report of such a choice was sufficient to cause a considerable portion of the people to arm themselves, and nearly produced a tumult. Had the nobles in fact elected a Donati as one of their Priors, there can be no doubt that the populace would have risen in arms. The Donati were considered to be "too powerful." When the names were published, and the people saw that they were all "proper and pacific nobles,"* they became tranquillized; but were nevertheless by no means entirely reconciled to the admission of any nobles at all.

And not a month passed since the first election under the new constitution, before it became evident that fresh troubles were at hand. Villani quotes on this occasion the

* "Convenevoli e pacifichi grandi." Villani, book xii. chap. xviii.

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well-known passage from the 6th Canto of the Purgatorio of Dante, in which he sneeringly accuses Florence of enacting A.D. 1343.

"tanto sottili
Provvedimenti, ch' a mezzo Novembre
Non giugne quel che tu d' Ottobre fili." *

And truly the words are strikingly prophetical of the conduct of the people on this occasion. But it is a mistake to attribute that conduct to fickleness. There was neither fickleness nor changeableness in the matter. The wishes and determination of the people were the same, when the new reform was consented to, as when they rejected it. The fact was that on the morrow of the expulsion of the Duke of Athens, the people had not felt themselves able to resist the persuasion of Count Simon and the Sienese ambassadors, and had given a reluctant consent to the new arrangements. But a man convinced against his will, as the adage says, is of the same opinion still. And this was exactly the case with the Florentine populace. Only that it scarcely represents the whole of the case. They were in fact not only of the same opinion still, but were more than ever of that opinion. And the manifestation of it is the leading feature of this period of Florentine history, —the rise into power and pretension of the populace as distinguished from the "*popolani grassi*," or well to do burghers. This latter class comprised the wealthiest men of the city, men in all social respects the equals of the nobles, with whom they intermarried and associated. The leading members of the class had by the assistance of the popular jealousy, which disfranchised the nobles, monopolized the government for some time previous to the usurpation of the Duke of Athens; and it must be admitted that

* "Such fine-spun provisions, that what you establish in October does not endure till the middle of November."



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A.D. 1343. at no period were the affairs of the Commonwealth managed with such glaring imbecility and corrupt jobbery.

Now those outsiders, by whose assistance the upper *bourgeoisie* had triumphed over the nobles, wanted to come in for their share of place and power. And the counter revolution, which broke out in opposition to the new constitution so recently established, was essentially a movement of the populace. On the 22nd of September, still in that same year, 1343, it was the "*popolo minuto*" which massed itself beneath the windows of the Palazzo, crying, "Hurrah for the people! Death to the grandee traitors! Throw them out of the windows! Throw those grandee Priors your companions out of the window; or we will burn you with them in the Palace."*

It was ominous of the events which were about to follow, and indicative of the path on which the Commonwealth was about to enter, that this tumultuary movement was wholly successful in its object. The four Priors belonging to the nobles were expelled from the Palace and from office. The Council of Eight, consisting of equal numbers of patricians and plebeians, was dissolved, and a new Council of Twelve, as before the tyranny of the Duke, appointed, three from each ward, and all plebeians. A similar course was adopted with regard to all the other offices. A greater Council of Three Hundred,—seventy-five from each ward,—all plebeians, was also elected.

Other natural results of such unconcealed abandonment of the principle of legality were not long in manifesting themselves. In the midst of the confusion created by the above changes, "a certain absurd and crack-brained knight, belonging to the class of the *popolani*,† one Messer

* Villani, book xii. chap. xix.

† It will be observed that the distinction between "*Grandi*" and "*Popolani*" depended in no wise on rank, but on birth alone, and was essentially of the nature of a "caste" difference.

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Andrea degli Strozzi by name," collected a crowd of some thousands of the lowest of the populace, and led them to the Piazza to demand still further *reformation* of the government, with cries of "Hurrah for the *popolo minuto!* Down with all taxes! and death to the *popolo grasso!*" For the demagogue knight had promised "to make them all rich, to give them bread in abundance, and make them all gentlemen." Notwithstanding the state of confusion, however, which prevailed in the city, and the formidable number of the rioters, their cry elicited no response from the body of the people, and they were easily dispersed, not without some loss of life, by the saner masses of the citizens. And the promptitude with which the Florentines quelled this riot, made by men whose real object, as Villani remarks, was simple robbery, is very noteworthy. The real danger to the stability of the Commonwealth was not of that nature. It is a remarkable fact, that neither in those old days of popular disturbance and aggression, nor at any moment of the social travail-throes through which Italy has passed and is passing in our own days, have any of those doctrines and schemes, the object of which is to make all men rich and all men gentlemen, and none of them taxpayers, found acceptance in Tuscany. There is a sort of shrewd commercial aptitude and natural capacity for comprehending the relations between wealth and the sources from which it arises, that prevent these people from being deceived by theories which are at bottom schemes for getting thirteen pence out of a shilling. And pure material sensualism forms so small a part, and acquisitiveness so large a part of their nature, that those more substantial plans of making all mankind, at the cost of moderate labour, well-fed and well-lodged members of some phalanstery, or other such joint-stock institution, which is to administer the earnings of all for the benefit of all, have no charm for them. No form

A.D. 1343.

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A.D. 1343. of socialism has ever found many supporters among the Tuscans.

What those turbulent Florentines of the fourteenth century wanted was by no means that everybody should be a gentleman, and that no taxes should be paid. What they wanted was that those who were not, and had no pretence of being, or wish to be gentlemen, should nevertheless be rulers, and have the spending of the taxes. Modify this desire a little, and it becomes the salutary basis of a free constitution. Had the demand been that the popular element should be duly represented in the government, and some control over the spending of the public resources conceded to the people, all would have been well. But this would not have contented the *popolo minuto*. This would have involved liberty. And the citizens of the mediæval Italian Commonwealth did not want nor love liberty. They loved tyranny, on the contrary. And it is a very superficial reading of their history which has popularized the notion, that those communities were the champions and supporters, if not the founders, of social liberty, because they so stoutly resisted attempts to tyrannize over them. They *were* bulwarks against despotism. But despotism is not the only kind of tyranny. The old Florentines utterly hated tyranny *over* them, and resisted it. But their unceasing disputes and civil wars were only for the settlement of the question, who were to be the tyrants. It was *not* to be one man;—not the "*governo d' uno solo.*" All were agreed so far, though their mutual distrust led them again and again voluntarily to submit themselves temporarily to this. But each party and each class in the community, which in turn ousted its opponents, and obtained power for itself, loved tyranny, aimed at tyrannizing, and used the power of the government for the most avowed and bare-facedly tyrannical purposes. No portion of their story, no phrase or remark in the contem-

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porary writers who have recorded it, goes to show that they had made any advance towards the discovery that freedom and successful self-government can be based only on such a love of liberty as includes that of others as well as of ourselves. A.D. 1343.

Messer Andrea degli Strozzi's riot was easily put down; but it was abundantly evident that the city was on the eve of another desperate struggle. It was not indeed to be supposed that the nobles would rest content or submit to the position which had been made for them. They were absolutely treated like a pariah caste. And they were no longer divided among themselves by as sharp a line of division as they had formerly been. The Duke of Athens, whose policy it had been to strengthen his position by attaching to himself as many as he could of the great families, had restored a number of the exiles; others had previously been allowed to return during the war with Pisa, when the needs of the State were such as to require the assistance of all her citizens. And now the quarrel was completely one of hostile castes.

It soon became known that the "*grandi*" were sending to their friends and fellow nobles in the country for aid; and were filling their palaces with armed men. Upon which the Signory did the like, sending messages to the Communes of Siena and Perugia. The former sent four hundred, and the latter city one hundred and fifty horsemen. From all the country round, moreover, armed men were flocking into the city, some in aid of the nobles, and some to support the side of the people. The Signory and the people, however, felt themselves to be the stronger party. They held possession of all the gates, except that of St. George,—the now long since disused gate at the top of the hill, close to the Fortress,—which was in the hands of the Bardi, whose palaces were, as they still are, in the immediate neighbourhood, and whose gardens extended up

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A.D. 1343. the hill behind them to the walls. Moreover, the Palazzo Pubblico "and the bell," as Villani says, "were in the hands of the government." It was evident that the struggle was coming; and people began to carry their most precious and portable effects into the churches and monasteries for security.

On the 25th of September, in the afternoon, the Medici and the Rondinelli, and some other of the leading *popolano* families of the San Giovanni quarter, put themselves at the head of about a thousand men, butchers and others of that part of the city, and commenced an attack on a barricade, which had been erected by the *Cavicciuli;* who were, says Villani, the strongest and bravest of all the "*grandi*" on that side of the river. The remark is one of many passages to be met with in the old histories, indicating that the "Oltrarno" quarter, or that on the further—*i. e.* the left—bank of the Arno,—that in which the Pitti palace is now situated, was in those days the principal and special seat of the power of the nobles. The Bardi, Rossi, Frescobaldi, Nerli, Mannelli, and others, all had their palaces there; and generally in cases of disturbance in the city, one of the first things thought of was to barricade the bridges, and thus render the "Oltrarno" quarter a strong and isolated fortress, which might be held after an enemy was in possession of all the rest of the city.

The Cavicciuli, the Donati, and other families on the right bank of the Arno, after more or less of resistance yielded, and were disarmed by the people, and compelled to hoist the standard of the Commonwealth on their palaces, as a sign of their submission to the government. The movement had by this time become general in the city. The first band, which had risen in arms in the St. Giovanni quarter, under the leadership of the Medici, Rondinelli, and others, had gradually been joined by all the non-noble inhabitants of the city, including some

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soldiers in the pay of the government. The entire city was up in arms, and the next thing to be done was to attack the nobles in their own special quarter on the other side of the river. A.D. 1343.

The first attempt made by the people for this purpose was to storm the Ponte Vecchio. But it had been so effectually barricaded, and was so well defended, principally by the Bardi and Rossi, that the people found it impossible to force a passage. The Rubaconte bridge, that above the Ponte Vecchio, now mostly called the "Ponte alle Grazie," was, if anything, still more strongly defended. The people therefore hurried to the Ponte alla Carraia, which was held by the Nerli, determined to force a passage there. But by the time they had arrived at the foot of the bridge, on the north or right hand side, the passage had already been forced by the plebeians from the populous district just within the San Frediano gate. The two streams of the victorious populace, therefore, having united themselves together, proceeded to attack first the palace of the Frescobaldi. That family had already defended itself successfully against the populace of that side of the river; but when they saw the whole city coming against them, and knew, therefore, that the bridge had been carried, they abandoned all hope; and coming out from their houses in suppliant guise, "with their arms laid crosswise on their breasts," asked mercy at the hands of the people. The populace allowed them to pass out of their home freely, and committed no act of violence against them. The palaces of the Rossi were next treated in the same way. And then came the turn of the Bardi, who much alarmed as they were at the victories of the people over the other noble houses, determined, nevertheless, to defend their own fortress to the utmost. They were better prepared for defence too than any of the other houses, being strongly garrisoned both with

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A.D. 1343. horse and foot, and a considerable band of hired troops, "in such sort that it was vain for the people to hope to take the house by open force in front." So a strong detachment climbed the hill of St. George, which rises immediately behind the Bardi palace, and attacked it in the rear. This unexpected assault drew off a large part of the force, which was engaged in defending the barricades in front of the house; and then these were at last forced, after hard fighting and some loss of life. Then the Bardi despaired of saving their palaces, or retaining their position in the city, and thought but of saving their lives, which they succeeded in doing only by escaping into the Borgo San Niccolò, towards the gate of the city so called. But all the Bardi houses,* and those of some of their neighbours, to the number of twenty-two, were first plundered of everything that could be carried away, and then burned. The Bardi were among the wealthiest merchants in Florence; and the loss sustained by them on this occasion was estimated at more than sixty thousand golden florins.

This capture and conquest put an end to the resistance of the nobles, and left the city wholly in the hands of the people; not of the "*minuto popolo*" only; for after the first beginning of the fray, all classes of the "*popolani*" had joined in the crusade against the nobles. But the plunder of the rich Bardi mansions so whetted the appetite of the lowest portion of the populace, that bands of plunderers infested the city for the two or three days

* The word houses or palaces is used here and elsewhere in the plural, because the different branches of those great families, as they were obliged to swarm out of the old original palace of the race, built other mansions in the immediate vicinity of the spot on which the family had originally settled; so that there were whole colonies of the more powerful families; the street in which they were situated was often called by their name, as in the case of the Bardi, and in the old chronicles the palaces, houses, towers of these families are always spoken of in the plural.

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following, till they were put down by large and strong patrols of the citizens, who went through all parts of the city, carrying with them "blocks and axes to cut off summarily the hands and feet of malefactors taken in the act." * A.D. 1343.

The people, both "*grasso*" and "*minuto*," as has been seen, concurred in the work of conquering and putting down the nobles. But when once more, as was usual after every revolutionary tumult, the constitution of the government had to be remodelled, the "small folks" were found to have become too powerful to be any longer excluded from their share of office. The Signory was now made to consist of eight Priors, of whom two were to be of the "*Arti Maggiori*," or "*popolani grassi;*" three of the so-termed middle guilds,—those seven, namely, which were first added to the five "*Arti Maggiori*," to make up the number to twelve; and three from the artificers, or inferior guilds. The Gonfaloniere was still to be chosen from the "*Arti Maggiori;*" but all the other offices were divided, so as to give to the inferior classes of the commonalty the same proportion of preponderance as in the College of Priors. This new constitution came into action on the 20th of October, 1343.

We have here then a community in which one important class, the highest in rank, is arbitrarily and, one may say, unnaturally excluded from all participation and influence in the government; in which the class next in social rank has a very restricted and limited share in the legislative, administrative, and executive functions of the Commonwealth, carefully so arranged as to ensure its being outvoted whenever any matter involving class interests or class jealousies may be the subject in hand; and in which such share in all those functions and departments as must

* Villani, book xii. chap. xxi.

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A.D. 1343. render the power of the lower portion of the operative classes absolutely paramount, is secured to them. It must be borne in mind moreover, in considering this scheme of social polity, that the wholly disfranchised class of nobles cannot be considered as at that time comprising merely the drones of the hive. They were probably the wealthiest class of the community; for they were the great land-owners, and many among them were great merchants also. The former quality would not have alone sufficed to make them the richest class in the city; nor did it contribute much to the consideration and importance which could not but be attached to their position even in democratic Florence. All greatness, all pride and ostentation, all ambition was essentially civic greatness, civic pride, and civic ambition in Florence. The possessor of a Chatsworth among the Chianti hills, or of a Stowe in the Casentino, would have derived little or no consideration in Florence from that circumstance. But if he were the owner of some grim old fortress mansion, blackened by the fire of probably more than one judiciary devastation at the hands of the executor of the *Ordini della Giustizia*, situated in a street in Florence, which for two hundred years or more had been called by his family name, then indeed the case was altered; and though hated, feared, jealously suspected by the Florentine populace, and excluded by them from all share in the honours and offices of the Commonwealth, he occupied a large space in the public eye, and was invested with a large share of involuntary respect in the public mind. When fighting was to be done,—and when was it ever far off in mediæval Florence?—his consequence became greater. And even if the class of nobles had wholly consisted of such swash-buckler ruffians as Corso Donati and his peers, yet it was to be remembered that his arm had done the State some service at Campaldino; and it would have been as unjust as imprudent to exclude

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such a class from all the rights of citizenship. But in the middle of the fourteenth century in Florence, the class of nobles by no means consisted wholly of men of that stamp. Many of the noble families were engaged in mercantile and industrial pursuits. The Bardi, for example, who, as we have just seen, were the objects of the most determined attack by the populace at the period of the last revolution, were, if not the first, among the first bankers and merchants in Florence, and in Europe. The contribution to the wealth, power, reputation, and European importance of Florence from their industry, their name, their capital, and their talents was enormous. The probably still wealthier firm of the Peruzzi, their rivals and sometimes their partners in some operations, their equals in all social respects, living in the same manner, engaged in the same occupations, moved by the same ambition, were members of the class of "*popolani*;" and as such eligible to all the dignities of the Commonwealth. And it was perfectly monstrous that the fatal stain of noble birth should have condemned the rival house to the disabilities of a pariah caste, or that such condemnation should be submitted to without resistance. Such a scheme of polity was unjust in morality, a solecism in social science, and a clumsy piece of incapacity and inefficient bungling, as a means of repressing the tendencies of the nobles to set themselves above the law. Yet so strangely potent over all minds is the moral and intellectual atmosphere in which they live, that Villani, who was a thoughtful, a highly educated, and moderate-minded man, and far from being under the influence of strong partisan feeling of any kind, writes thus of the new arrangement established on the 20th of October:— A.D. 1343.

"This constitution was a good and impartial—(*comune*)—one enough, if it had not been afterwards corrupted. But it was found, as time went on, that when the Priors

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A.D. 1343. were drawn by lot,* a greater number of the small-guild artificers came up, than the proportion intended by the constitution." And he goes on to show how this arose from the preponderance of the lower guilds in the original voting of the names to be put into the bags.

But it was inevitable that this should come to pass. The Nemesis was coming on the "*popolani grassi*" according to the operation of laws as unerring and unalterable as those which regulate any one of the developments of nature in the material world. And it was but a continuance of the process, which had enabled the upper *bourgeoisie* to oust those above them in the social scale from all political franchise, that now threatened to disfranchise their own class, in effect at least, if not in name.

For the present the nobles appeared to acquiesce in their defeat; and contented themselves with laying two humble petitions before the popular majesty. The first demanded the repeal of that very harsh enactment of the "*Ordini della Giustizia*," which rendered every individual of a widely ramified noble family liable for wrong done to a man of the people by any one of its members. And the second was, that "certain clans of nobles, not of the more powerful sort, and not malignant," might be permitted to relinquish and renounce their nobility, and thenceforth be considered in all respects plebeians. Each of these petitions was conceded in part and rejected in part, quite according to the classical precedent and practice of the Olympian Jove. Nobles, it was settled, were to be responsible one for the other in future only within the third degree of relationship. And certain specified noble families, several of whom had "fallen to nothing and become tillers of the soil," † were

* From the names put into a bag by a complex form of election not materially changed from that described in a former chapter, on occasion of another revolution in the constitution.

† Villani, book xii. chap. xxiii.

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allowed to purge themselves of the stain of their nobility and become "people." It was provided, however, that no member even of these families should be eligible to any of the higher offices for five years; and if in the course of the next ten years, any of the nobles thus enfranchised should commit any outrage or injury against the person or property of a plebeian, he was condemned to be and remain noble,—he and his descendants for evermore. A.D. 1343.

And thus was completed, as Villani remarks,* the third revolution through which Florence had passed in little more than a year, so that within that short space four different constitutions had been tried. Before the tyranny of the Duke of Athens, the government was in the hands of the "*popolo grasso.*" Their incapacity and jobbery led to the usurpation of despotic power by that adventurer. After his expulsion, by the united efforts of all classes of the citizens, a mixed government of nobles and plebeians was for a short time in power. "And now," says Villani, summing up his recapitulation, "we are under the rule of the artisans and the *popolo minuto.* God grant that it may answer!"

The immediate results of the change do not appear to have justified the very natural misgiving of the then aged † historian, that the new constitution would lead to worse troubles than those which he had hitherto had to chronicle. Indeed it is surprising that so radical a revolution and displacement of power in the State should not have produced more marked changes in the conduct of the national affairs, than is discoverable to have been the case. If

* Book xii. chap. xxiii.

† Giovanni Villani, the father of Florentine history, and by far the most valuable of all the numerous contemporary chroniclers of Florence, died in 1348, in the great pestilence of that year. The year of his birth is not known. But he began to write his history in the year 1300, having first conceived the idea of doing so, as he tells us, when he was at Rome in that year on the occasion of the Jubilee. It can hardly be supposed that he was then less than twenty, and he was in all probability some years older.

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A.D. 1343. during the war between Great Britain and her revolted American colonies, a revolution had taken place in England, which had placed a majority of artisans not only in parliament but in the cabinet, and in every executive office, would a government so constituted have contented itself with making peace with America, and sending into exile four or five families of notorious borough-mongering tory nobles? Such a line of conduct would, however, have been a tolerably accurate counterpart of that followed by the Florentine government of the "*popolo minuto.*" They made peace with Pisa, giving up at the same time the long-cherished hope of acquiring the sovereignty of Lucca; and they banished from the Florentine territory some fifteen or twenty individuals belonging to five of the most obnoxious noble families, Bardi, Frescobaldi, Donati, Rossi, and Cavicciulli. But no less than five hundred nobles, disfranchised by previous legislation, were relieved of their disabilities at the cost of renouncing their nobility.*

Villani complains with some bitterness of the terms of the peace made with Pisa. The latter community engaged to pay on account of Lucca 100,000 golden florins to Florence in the course of fourteen years. All the fortresses in the Lucchese territory, which were at that time in the hands of the Florentines, were to remain in their hands. Merchandise the property of Florentine citizens, coming into Pisa by sea, was to enter free up to the amount of 200,000 golden florins a year. All beyond that quantity was to pay two *denari* † per pound weight. On the other hand, merchandise belonging to citizens of Pisa, arriving from Venice by land in Florence, was to be free to the amount of 30,000 florins, and all beyond that quantity

* Villani, book xii. chap. xxiii.

† The *denaro* was the twelfth part of a *soldo*. The *soldo* was the twentieth part of a *lira*. Three *lire* and five *soldi* made a golden *florin*: eight of which weighed an ounce of pure gold. The tax per pound weight, therefore, was the three hundred and ninetieth part of an ounce of gold.

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was to pay two *denari* the pound weight. The historian, who was himself a commercial man, and who two years after this time, and three before his death, suffered bankruptcy and imprisonment for debt * in consequence of the failure of the firm of Buonaccorsi and Company, itself pulled down by the fall of the great house † of the Peruzzi, complains of the above terms, alleging that all Florentine merchandise had from time immemorial come into the port of Pisa free. But Pisan merchandise had also been free in Florence; and now the new arrangements were so far in favour of Florence that the quantity of Florentine goods to be admitted free at Pisa was very much more than double that which, according to the treaty, the Pisans were to bring in free to Florence. And on the whole it can hardly be thought that the new government did badly, when it is remembered how absolutely necessary it was to Florence to have peace with her great and powerful rival. For the Commonwealth had by no means come out from the contest with a despotic master, into whose power the gross misgovernment of the wealthy burgher class had betrayed her, such as it had been before it fell beneath his tyranny. It was not only that the violent struggle by which Florence had succeeded in throwing off the yoke had necessarily caused a shock and wrench in every part of the body social, which wholly unfitted her for immediately renewing a desperate war with such a power as Pisa; but she emerged from the life or death struggle despoiled of nearly all the subject communes, towns, and castles which had contributed so largly to her strength. A.D. 1343.

* See a notice of Giovanni Villani prefixed to the 8th volume of the edition of his works published at Florence in 1823, by Magheri. The notice of Villani is signed "Pietro Massai."

† This was that colossal failure of the Peruzzi and the Bardi, which resulted from the non-payment by our Edward III. of a loan of 1,365,000 golden florins, and which shook to its foundations the whole commercial fabric and credit of Florence.



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A.D. 1346. Almost all the governors of these had either traitorously or pusillanimously given them up, some to other communes, some to the inhabitants themselves, some to neighbouring tyrants,* as soon as they saw that the power of the Duke who had placed them in their offices was at an end. Most of them had taken money as the price of their treason. Arezzo, Volterra, Montopoli, Serravalle, and many other towns and fortresses of less note were thus lost, at all events for the time, to Florence. And it was absolutely necessary to think of endeavouring to recover these losses, rather than of rushing into a dangerous war with the most formidable of all the neighbours of the Commonwealth.

But greater difficulties and more terrible calamities were near at hand; and the administrative capacity of the new government was about to be tried in a more arduous task than the recovery of lost dependencies. Famine and pestilence, the two most tremendous scourges in all the penal code ordained by Providence for the punishment of non-compliance with the laws of Nature, were due in Europe, and were now at the door. That fourteenth-century world recognized indeed in these dreadful visitations the punishing hand of Heaven. But blinded by superstitions equally destructive of any due conception of the attributes of the Creator, and of all pure moral sentiment, it failed to read the lesson aright, or draw from it any of the weighty teaching it was calculated to convey. Discontented politicians saw in calamities, which fell on all classes of the community alike, the punishment due to rulers whose conduct they did not approve, and governors read in them the castigation of disobedient nations. All men were loud in declaring that the vengeance of a wrathful Deity had been provoked by the special sins wherewith their neighbours were chargeable; but none had yet learned

* Ammirato, book ix. Gonf. 305.

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that in the divine government of the world all human sins, frailties, and shortcomings are punished in kind only. They did not know yet that moral evil must be looked for as the product and punishment of moral sins, and material calamity as the result and corrective of ignorant mismanagement of that material world, which has been delivered over to man that he may exercise on the management of it those faculties with which God has endowed him. A.D. 1317.

In that fourteenth century, so brilliant in many respects, ignorance of all that could prevent, remedy, or alleviate either of the scourges which then fell on Italy, and on Europe in general, was extremely great. And the evil passions and folly which desolated the face of the earth with wars, and the evil living, which outraged every sanatory law, and fostered disease in every conceivable way, produced the normal conditions required for the development of both famine and pestilence. So famine and pestilence came; and no howsoever unstinted amount of litanies or sacramental sacrifices availed to stay the plague.

Some alleviation to the first of these calamities was obtained for wealthy Florence by the care of the government and the unsparing expenditure of the public money. The harvest of 1346 failed almost entirely. All the products of the soil,—wine, oil, forage of all sorts,—were equally wanting. But the deficiency of the different sorts of grain was the most complete of all. At the time of the harvest in 1346, wheat was worth nearly half a florin a bushel; and in May, 1347, it had already risen to more than double that price. Meat during the same months rose from one and a half to eleven *soldi* the pound. The rise in every other article of human food,—even of bran,—was the same. The mischief was of course increased by the pernicious notion universally prevalent in those days that it was a part of the duty of every government to



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A.D. 1347. regulate and care for a due supply of food for its subjects. It may be safely asserted, that the quantity of mischief and suffering inflicted on mankind by the tyranny of its rulers in mediæval and modern Europe, tremendous as the sum of that may have been, has been less in amount than that which has arisen from the attempts—mostly well intentioned—of governors to regulate the lives, actions, and interests of men in matters which do not fall within the proper functions of civil government. Imperfectly as the importance and full scope of this principle is recognized even yet by the most civilized nations of the world, men have come for the most part to understand that governments cannot interfere with those trading operations by which the supply of human wants is effected, without doing mischief proportioned in its extent and intensity to the importance of the article, the supply of which is sought to be regulated. It has been found out now,—at least in England,—that government-meddling with the price and supply of corn must ever be more efficacious towards creating than towards averting scarcity. And it will be understood that the influence in the same direction must have been far more powerful when the opinion prevailed universally that it was one of the normal functions of every government to provide for the due supply of the food market in its territory.

Inasmuch, however, as such was the universal opinion and practice, the suffering in time of difficulty would of course have been yet greater, had the government failed to discharge the duties it had mischievously taken on itself, and if the harmful support were suddenly withdrawn from the people, who had been taught to depend on it. Accepting therefore, thus under protest, the efforts made by the artisan Signory of Florence to mitigate the calamity of the scarcity, it may be said that no government, either on that or on any similar occasion ever did more, or more liberally,

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towards standing between its people and the "judgment," which its war, and waste, and ignorance of agronomical and economical laws had merited. At the first appearance of the deficiency in the harvest, the Signory effected large purchases of grain, both wheat and barley, in Greece, Sicily, Sardinia, Tunis, Barbary, and Calabria. On attempting, however, to bring these supplies in, through the ports of Genoa and Pisa, more than half the quantity obtained was forcibly detained by the governments of those cities for the relief of their own pressing necessities. Something towards replacing the supplies thus lost was obtained from the Maremma and Romagna at an enormous price; although neither of those districts had food enough for their own inhabitants. Altogether, the Signory succeeded in collecting 26,000 *moggia* * of wheat, and 1700 *moggia* of barley. Ten large public ovens were erected near the *Porta Romana,* where a number of men and women were employed all day and all night in baking bread, made from unbolted flour, "very coarse and repulsive both to sight and to taste."† Each *moggio* of grain was made into 2592 loaves of six ounces each, and from eighty-five to an hundred *moggia* were thus consumed daily. Every morning the sound of the great bell on the Palazzo Pubblico gave the signal for distribution. Two six-ounce loaves were allowed daily to every individual at four *denari* each. The grain had cost the Signory eleven golden florins the *moggio;* and at the price of four *denari* for each loaf, there would be a loss of forty-seven *soldi* on each *moggio,* besides the cost of making it into bread and distributing it. Villani states the entire loss to the treasury to have been more than 30,000 golden florins. At first, two loaves were given to every comer who brought the stipulated price in

A.D. 1347.

* A measure containing about 860 pounds weight.

† Villani, book xii. chap. lxxiii. *Crudele* is the word translated "repulsive" in the text.

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A.D. 1347. his hand. But it was soon found that so many people obtained more than the allotted quantity, that recourse was had to a system of tickets, which effectually limited the quantity issued to the two six-ounce loaves per diem to each mouth. And in the middle of April, 1347, it was found from these tickets, that the number of mouths to be fed from the public ovens was 94,000;—which number, as Villani remarks, did not include either the class of well-to-do citizens and their households, or that of beggars, friars, and others, who lived by alms. The crowd of these was, says the historian, "without number;" for the starving multitudes from all the country round, had naturally flocked to Florence; "and it was an unceasing battle night and day between the mendicants and the citizens." Nevertheless, so unstinted was the charity of the Florentines, and so abundant the wealth poured forth to meet the demands on it, that throughout the whole of that terrible year, no human being was turned away from the gates of Florence, or suffered the extremity of hunger within its walls. All were fed, whether they were Florentine subjects or foreigners.

In the latter part of June, 1347, the promise of the new harvest caused the price of grain to drop suddenly. Efforts were made by regraters to arrest the fall. There were threatenings of tumult in the city; and the populace were only to be appeased by the hanging of one baker, who had made himself especially obnoxious to them. In the September of that year, the pinch of the famine may be said to have ceased.

But the beginning of a yet more dreadful calamity was already making its appearance in the city. Epidemic disease has very commonly been observed to follow closely on the heels of famine. And the connection of the two visitations, in the relation of cause and effect, is very readily understood. It would seem clear, however, from

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the accounts of contemporary writers, mixed up as their more credible statements are with wild tales and grotesque superstitions of the strangest extravagance, that the mortality consequent upon the effects of the famine did but prepare Western Europe for the outbreak of a contagious malady imported from the East. The deaths in Florence previous to the arrival of this contagion did not exceed five per cent.; and by far the greater number of the victims were women and children,* on whose constitutions the sufferings of the famine had naturally produced the most pernicious and permanent results. But in the course of 1348, the infection, which had been first brought to Pisa and Genoa by ships from the Levant, had spread over the whole of Italy. Milan alone was most remarkably all but, if not entirely, exempted from the scourge. In 1349 it had overrun the whole of Western Europe, including our own islands; and in 1350 it reached the countries of the extreme north. A.D. 1348.

This was that great plague, the most memorable of all the numerous afflictions of a similar kind which chastised the ignorance and ill-conditioned living of the middle ages, that has been rendered celebrated by the description of Boccaccio, and by the immortal tales which he feigned to be occasioned by it. Matteo Villani, the continuer of the history of his brother Giovanni, who died of the pestilence, has also described the circumstances of it in Florence. And the accounts of these authors, the latter of whom at all events did but write down a simple matter-of-fact statement of that which he witnessed, are filled with circumstances calculated to impress the imagination of the reader with such a picture of desolation and reckless despair, as the annals of mankind have rarely recorded. The infectious nature of the malady either was, or was supposed to be, of such virulence that contact with the persons

* Villani, book xii. chap. lxxxiv.

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A.D. 1348 or with the belongings of the sick was not needed for the propagation of it. To come near those stricken,—even to look on them,—was imagined to be fatal. The result of this exaggerated terror was to rouse into activity the latent selfishness and ferocious egoism of all save the noblest hearts. Base cowardice was countenanced by examples of inhumanity more contagious than the material pestilence. Children deserted their parents, husbands their dying wives, fathers and even mothers their offspring. All the bonds of social life were loosened. Even those of interest, which usually avail to secure the solidarity of society, even where better considerations fail to do so, were destroyed by the universal dislocation and disruption. Debtors and their representatives were sought for in vain. Creditors were never more heard of. Property was abandoned. Houses empty of their owners, or tenanted solely by the corpses of them, stood open and at the disposition of the first comer sufficiently reckless to venture across a threshold, guarded against intruders more efficiently by the presence of its master's body, than any bolts and bars would have sufficed to guard it.

Yet such recklessness was abundant in the stricken city! The phenomenon is an invariable and well-known one. Greatly increased uncertainty of life has always been observed to enforce on those exposed to it, the sensualist's "eat and drink, for to-morrow we die!" far more successfully than the preacher's "*respice finem!*" Morality is rarely found elsewhere at so low an ebb as in a plague-stricken city. The tendency to such a frame of mind was increased in the present case by a very widely-spread belief,—probably not altogether unfounded on reasonable grounds,—that joviality and unthinking cheerfulness and mirth were the best preservatives against the contagion. "In various respects," says Matteo Villani,* "the expecta-

* Book i. chap. iv.

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tions of the few grave citizens who escaped the pestilence, as to the results likely to follow from it, turned out to be wholly contradicted by the event. It was thought that those who survived would become better, more humble, more virtuous, and better Catholics, keeping themselves from iniquity and sin, and abounding in mutual love and charity. But no sooner did the malady cease, than the contrary was seen to be the case. And men, being few in number, and abounding in worldly goods, by reason of the numerous successions to the property of those who had perished, forgetting the past as though it had never been, gave themselves up to dissoluteness and depravity, more than they had ever done before. For living in idleness, they fell into the sin of inordinate gluttony, frequenting banquets and taverns, delighting in delicate food, in gambling, and in the most unbridled immorality, inventing new, strange, and indecent fashions of dress, and changing the forms of all implements and articles of use. And the *minuto popolo*, both men and women, having abundance of all things, would not work at their accustomed occupations; but fed themselves on the most costly and delicate food, formed marriages *ad libitum*, the lowest of men and women clothing themselves with the magnificent and costly garments of those who had died." A.D. 1349.

Men were as entirely astray in their economical as in their moral speculations. It was expected that the great diminution of the number of consumers would have caused extraordinary cheapness of all things necessary for human life.* But it was forgotten that the number of producers was as much or more diminished than that of consumers; that one year's produce of the earth had been nearly lost, and that all the operations of trade had been suspended and dislocated. The consequence was, that instead of

* Matteo Villani, book i. chap. v.

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A.D. 1349. being cheaper after the pestilence, every article of food and of manufactured goods became and remained for a year or two very much dearer than it had been before.

The plague raged in Florence from April to September; and it was observed that five months was the usual time of its duration in other cities. The deaths in Florence averaged six hundred a day; and three-fifths of the population are recorded to have perished. It was during this terrible mortality that the since celebrated company of "La Misericordia" took that high place in the estimation of the Florentines, which it has held in every subsequent age. When the bodies of the dead were abandoned by their nearest friends and relatives, when whole families were lying in houses no longer containing any living soul, when the streets of Florence were made hideous and fearful by the corpses of those who had fallen dead or dying by the way-side, when the danger of the office was such, that scarcely any reward would induce the most needy or the most careless of the populace to undertake the task of burying the dead, the devoted brethren of the *Misericordia* did not shrink from the dread duties self-imposed upon them by the ordinances of their institute. The improved arrangements of modern life have no longer left to voluntary charity the duty of burying the dead. That was the special "work of mercy" to which the brethren dedicated themselves at the time of their foundation in the 13th century; and such was the imperfection of all those provisions, which are first made necessary by the assembling of men into large communities, that the institution supplied a pressing want not only in time of pestilence, but under the ordinary circumstances of the city. As modern manners and habits took this particular function out of the hands of the brethren, they applied themselves to other works of mercy the most nearly akin to the objects of their first institution. And the same black and masked processions,

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shrouded in the all-concealing gowns and hoods intended to prevent the possibility of the wearer's good deeds being seen of men, which carried the plague-stricken corpses to sepulture in mediæval Florence, may be seen at the present day transporting in their covered litters the sick to the hospital, or the victims of street accidents and sudden illness to their homes. A.D. 1349.

The contemporary Florentine writers speak with much complacency of the large amounts of money bequeathed for charitable purposes during the period of the pestilence. But the record of the sums so disposed of by plague-stricken and dying penitents is more valuable as illustrating the social consequences of the visitation, than as any testimony to the piety of testators, who deemed that such an appropriation of their money was the sole remaining possibility of expending it for their own personal behoof. Thirty-five thousand golden florins were thus left to the brotherhood of the *Misericordia;* twenty-five thousand to the hospital of *Santa Maria Nuova;* and no less than three hundred and fifty thousand to the Captains of the Company of Saint Michael in the Garden,* a pious and charitable association founded towards the end of the thirteenth century. The sudden possession of this immense sum seems to have served no other purpose than to corrupt and demoralize the confraternity to which the administration of it had been entrusted. The poor for the relief of whom all these legacies had been destined were all dead. The pestilence had thoroughly cleared the city of its destitute class. And the consequence was, that the Captains or rulers of the Company disposed of the immense sums in their hands entirely as they pleased, making large grants to their own friends and connections, executing leases on scandalously beneficial terms, and selling property for

* "Or San Michele."

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A.D. 1350. prices which bore no proportion to its value. It had become all of a sudden so "good a thing" to be one of the Captains of the Company of Or San Michele, that all sorts of intrigues were set on foot by powerful citizens to secure their election to an office which had hitherto been little else than a sort of precentorship of an association formed for the singing of lauds to the Virgin.*

It is surprising to find a community whose population had been diminished by three-fifths of their entire number, engaged in aggressive war within a couple of years from the cessation of such a calamity. It is true that the cities, against which Florence measured her convalescent strength had suffered equally from the same infliction. But it is, nevertheless, a very striking evidence of the inextinguishable desire for material growth and enlargement which animated the Florentines with a constancy and over-riding force such as to make it appear an instinctive tendency and law of their being, that almost on the morrow of the exhausting calamity which has been described, they should have applied themselves as eagerly as ever to the recovery of the towns and territories lost at the period of the fall of the Duke of Athens. Such was, however, the first thought of the Commonwealth,—unchanging in this respect, whether under the government of nobles, of wealthy merchant plebeians, or of artisans,—within a few months after the cessation of the great plague. In 1350, Colle and San Gemigniano were retaken, and Prato soon followed. In the next year, Pistoia was once again reduced to obedience, and added to the Florentine territory.

While Florence was thus successfully subjecting to her authority these neighbouring communities, she had been engaged in fresh efforts to put down some of the robber nobles of the Apennines. We have seen her almost con-

* Matteo Villani, book i. chap. vii.

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tinually engaged in those efforts for now nearly two centuries and a half; and almost always with very complete success. And it seems strange that the work should still be uncompleted. The character, too, of the independent chieftains, who owned no allegiance save to the Emperor, —an allegiance more than ever nugatory and merely nominal,—had become worse instead of improving with the progressing civilization of the world around them. Of course those of the class who had survived the efforts of the Communes, especially of the great Guelph Commune, Florence, to destroy them, were such as had their feudal holdings and castles in the remoter and less accessible districts. Living in such fortresses in lawless defiance of the civilized communities in their neighbourhood, they had for the most part become mere bandit chiefs and highway robbers. The cut-throat ruffians, who formed the garrisons of their castles, and the bands that sallied forth from them on predatory expeditions, were in great part made up of the blood connections of the chief,—brothers, uncles, cousins, often to the third or fourth degree, and in part of hired deperadoes, generally the off-scourings and exiles of the cities. Of course the existence of such men impeded civilization, and was injurious to the industrious inhabitants of the cities in various ways. The simplest of the many evils caused by these bandit chiefs,—that of rendering the roads unsafe to travellers,—was a very serious one to the mercantile Florentines. And it cannot be doubted that the Commonwealth would have long since succeeded in thoroughly extirpating them, had they not been fostered and protected by means and from motives curiously similar to those which are now in operation for the encouragement of a somewhat lower—that is to say, less powerful and more wretched—race of brigands in the recesses of the southern districts of the Apennines. Just as the Neapolitan brigandage is now used to impede the consolidation

A.D. 1350.

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A.D. 1351. of Italy into one whole, so the brigand barons of the fourteenth century were used by the Ghibellinizing despots of northern Italy as a means of weakening, harassing, and destroying the property of the *bourgeois*, Guelph, anti-noble, anti-divine-right community of Florence.

It was against the Ubaldini, an incorrigible clan of marauding nobles, who had given trouble to Florence for centuries, and who infested the road between Bologna and the Tuscan cities, having their castles in that wild district of Apennine mountain and forest which forms the frontier between Tuscany and the Romagna, that the Commonwealth now directed its arms. These Ubaldini, "trusting in their mountain fortresses, gave harbour to the outlaws of Florence, and used in company with them to descend by night into the Mugello,* and rob houses and kill the inhabitants, retiring with their plunder into the mountains. Having done this for a long time by night, they at last began to do it by day also." † But the special outrage which roused Florence to send the city forces into the mountains against them on the occasion in question, was the robbery and murder of a Florentine merchant, one Maghinardo, who was returning with two thousand florins from Avignon. He fled, and nearly escaped the brigands. But they pursued, caught, and murdered him on the territory of Florence.‡ The Florentines at once sent a body of troops into the Apennines, which punished the Ubaldini severely, but did not succeed in destroying their stronghold. "Perceiving, therefore, that the robber pride of the Ubaldini was not to be put down by one beating, the

* The fertile valley of the Sieve, lying between the mountain district inhabited by the Ubaldini, and a secondary sub-Apennine chain dividing the Mugello from the Valdarno.

† M. Villani, book i. chap. xxiii.

‡ "Sul *contado* di Firenze." The phrase does not mean merely the country over which Florence held dominion, but the district immediately around the city.

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Florentines decreed that an attack should be made upon them every year till they were deprived of their mountain lairs." * Accordingly an expedition was sent against the almost impregnable stronghold of Montegemmoli, which was captured in consequence of the defenders having imprudently sallied out against the Florentine forces, and so given them an opportunity of forcing their way into the castle, together with the retreating garrison. A.D. 1351.

Montegemmoli was taken; and so much would have been accomplished towards the final suppression of the Ubaldini ruffians, had it not been for that political connection with the Ghibelline princes which has been mentioned, and which now made this police-execution against brigands the cause of far more serious warlike operations.

The principal Ghibelline chieftain now in Italy was the Archbishop of Milan, Giovanni Visconti. If any further illustration of the nature and meaning of Ghibellinism at this period of Italian history were yet needed to render it clear to the reader, this position of the Archbishop Visconti would suffice to do so. We have seen the Visconti driven from their dominions by the Emperor; we have seen them allied with Guelph cities against a Ghibelline league; the present chief of the family is an archbishop, and as such should have been of the ecclesiastical side in politics. But all these circumstances were not sufficient to counteract the natural Ghibellinism inherent in the position of a despotic prince.

Giovanni Visconti, the archbishop, had succeeded his brother Luchino in the government of Milan in 1349. The union of the temporal and spiritual authority and revenues in the same hands, increased the already formidable power of the family; and the ambitious and unscru-

* M. Villani, book i. chap. xxv. "*Spelonche*," caverns, is the word used by the historian, and is indicative of the sort of feeling with which these mountain nobles were regarded in Florence.

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A.D. 1351. pulous churchman at once engaged in schemes for the extension of the family possessions beyond the limits of Lombardy. He induced the brothers Jacopo and Giovanni Pepoli, who had made themselves tyrants of Bologna, to sell him the lordship of that city, to the infinite indignation of the citizens. Giovanni Pepoli had gone to enjoy his ill-gotten wealth at Milan; but Jacopo still remained in Bologna as a private citizen. The archbishop, however, not feeling secure in the enjoyment of his purchase, and perhaps regretting the large sum of money he had paid for it, trumped up a charge against him of conspiring with the citizens of Bologna, and with the Florentines, against the Visconti government, summoned him to Milan, took from him the monies he had received for the betrayal of his native city, as well as all the rest of his property, and condemned him to perpetual imprisonment.*

Having thus made himself safe in Bologna, and being in close alliance with all the smaller Lombard tyrants, the ambitious archbishop determined once again to attempt that great and constant object of Ghibelline ambition, the conquest and subjection of the Commonwealth of Florence. Once more the old machinery was put in operation. All the scattered Ghibelline elements of central Italy were raked up and collected together,—independent robber nobles from the recesses of the Apennine, exiles and sons of exiles from the Guelph cities, discontented and disaffected citizens from all quarters. There were Pozzi from the Valdarno, Interminelli from the Lucca hills, Ubaldini from the Apennines, the Counts of Santafiora from the southern Tuscan Maremma, and Donati from Florence, metamorphosed from Florentine Guelph citizens into bandit Ghibelline adventurers by discontented ambition, and the unforgotten and unforgiven fate of the old chieftain who

* Matteo Villani, book ii. chap. iii.

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was hunted to death at San Salvi. There was once again hope, and the burnishing of old armour in every noble hold and mountain castle from the Po to the Tiber. Even old Piero Sacconi, of the bitter Ghibelline race of the Arezzo Tarlati, got into the saddle once again. He might have fought, and in all probability did fight at Campaldino; for he was past ninety now, in 1351, and must therefore have been twenty-four at the time of the great Guelph victory over the Ghibellines of Arezzo. But he could still draw the sword in the old quarrel; and, if not bear the brunt of a pitched battle, could still harry the homesteads of a cultivated district, and enjoy the burning of a town. The fierce old nonagenarian Ghibelline absolutely put to the rout the contingent of troops sent by Perugia to the support of Florence, and then took and burned the little town of Figline in the upper Valdarno; and lived six years afterwards! A.D. 1351.

Fortunately for Florence, Pisa was not on this occasion as ready as usual to rush into war for the advancement of the Ghibelline cause. The Archbishop did not fail to have agents in the city, who endeavoured to induce the Pisans to embark once again in the cause for which they had fought so often, and suffered so much. But, though not absolutely refusing to take any part in the proposed war, Pisa had evidently no wish to break off a profitable commerce with Florence. For the Ghibelline city was at that time ruled by the Gambacorti, "mercantile men, and friends of the Florentines." It may be easily imagined that these mercantile rulers were likely to think more about the depôt trade in Florence cloths than about the ancient Ghibelline principles of Pisa; so all that the envoys of the Archbishop could get out of them amounted to little more than that they would think about it.

During all these threatening preparations, the Signory of Florence remained either uninformed or heedless of



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A.D. 1351. what was going on. "But so it is apt to happen in our city; since every low artisan of the commonalty is bent on rising to rank in the Signory, and to the highest offices in the Commonwealth, to which the management of the most important affairs are entrusted. And by means of their guilds they succeed in their ambition. Similarly also a crowd of other citizens, men of no ability, and often of recent citizenship, by means of indefatigable canvassing, and bribery, and treating, cause their names to be put into the electoral urns at the triennial * elections; and the multitude of these is so great that the good citizens of the old stock, wise and prudent men, rarely get an opportunity of managing the affairs of the Commonwealth;—a state of things wholly unknown to the ancient government of our forefathers, and very different from their farsighted prudence. Hence it arises that the defence of the State has frequently to be provided for at the last moment in a hurry; and that the city of Florence is governed and directed rather by the momentum of its former political impulsion, and by its own stability, and by fortune, than by the prudence or policy of its present rulers. Each man is intent during the two months he has to remain in power, on his own private interests, on favouring his friends, or injuring his enemies by means of the power of the Commonwealth." †

It is impossible to doubt, that the complaints recorded in this remarkable passage were well founded. The evils pointed out are exactly those, which might be expected to arise from a political constitution dictated by the extremest

* Among the other new arrangements after the expulsion of the Duke of Athens, it was settled that a certain number of names of citizens eligible to the offices of the Commonwealth should be by vote put into *borse*, pockets or bags, every three years, to be thence drawn by lot for the different offices as the vacancies occurred.

† Matteo Villani, book ii. chap. ii.

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jealousy and mistrust of all those in whose hands the power of the State was placed;—a constitution which attempted to conjure the dangers inseparable from that extreme democracy which made the highest office accessible to all classes in the community, by limiting, checking, diminishing, and supervising the power so entrusted in every imaginable manner; which atoned for committing power to incapable or untrustworthy hands, by tying those hands to prevent the abuse of it. Of course, the tendency of such a system must be to bring inferior men to the helm, and to keep away from it the best men in the State. It is curious to mark how similar causes have produced similar results in the most democratic community of modern times; and yet more instructive to observe how the same evils had a tendency to drive the communities suffering from them to seek a remedy by recurring to the opposite extreme of arbitrary and well-nigh irresponsible power. A.D. 1351.

Nevertheless, in the war between the Archbishop Visconti leagued with the Ghibellines, and the Commonwealth of Florence, improvidence on the one side was balanced by incapacity on the other. Messer Giovanni de' Visconti da Oleggio, who was said by the scandal of the day to be a son of the Archbishop, was named by him Captain-General of the Ghibelline forces; and crossed the Apennines from Bologna to Pistoia on the 28th of July, 1351. But though the war lasted nearly two years, and was productive enough of damage and suffering to both parties,—specially to the inhabitants of the countries overrun,—it was alike unmarked by any great events, and barren of appreciable results. Peace was at length made between the contending parties by the interposition of Pope Clement VI., who, keeping a dissolute court at Avignon, troubled himself little about Italian affairs; and now interested himself in favour of the Visconti, only from



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A.D. 1353. corrupt motives.* The Archbishop had incurred ecclesiastical censures for his conduct in the matter of Bologna, and his war against the friends and allies of the Church. But he had made powerful interest with Clement VI. to obtain his pardon and reconciliation. The King of France had interceded in his favour. And though Florence sent ambassadors to Avignon to prevent the Pope, if possible, from becoming reconciled with their enemy, their efforts were to no purpose. It was found, as Matteo Villani bitterly says, that the Holy Father had determined on favouring the tyrant; and though it was felt at Florence, that the peace was a hollow one, and that there could never be really good will between the despots of upper Italy and their own democratic community, which was ever the bar and obstacle to ambitious schemes of the princelings to extend their domination, they found themselves obliged to submit to the Pope's wishes, and to sign a treaty of peace, which was ratified and published on the 1st of April, 1353.

* Matteo Villani, book iii. chap. xliii.

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## CHAPTER VI.

Evils arising from the mercenary troops in Italy—Werner, or Guarnieri—His free company—Frà Moriale, or Montreal—His company—Attacks the territory of Rimini—Bought off by the Florentines—Frà Moriale put to death by Rienzi at Rome—Count Lando, his successor—Florentines guard the passes of the Apennines against the free lances—Bishop of Narni preaches a crusade against Lando and his company—Legate bribes him with 30,000 golden florins—Calls on Florence to pay her portion of this sum—Progress of social opinion on the subject of hireling soldiers—The company engaged by Siena—Negotiation between Florence and the company respecting their passage through Florentine territory—March of the company across the Apennines—Attacked in the defiles of the mountains by the peasants—Lando taken prisoner—Critical position of the Florentine ambassadors—The company take refuge in Dicomano—Move thence to Vicchio—And finally escape into Romagna—Count Lando liberated—Cardinal Albornoz, Papal legate, agrees to pay the company 125,000 florins—Asks Florence to pay her share—Florence refuses—And musters forces to resist the company—Pandolfo Malatesta, the Florentine General—He offers battle to Lando—Lando sends a challenge—but decamps in the night—Emperor Charles of Luxembourg arrives in Pisa, 18th January, 1355—Imperial claims and objects — Giovanni Boccaccio sent ambassador to the Pope — Ominously good understanding between Pope and Emperor—Florentine ambassadors to the Emperor at Pisa—Terms agreed on between the Emperor and the Florentines—Personal appearance and manner of the Emperor.

The practice of hiring troops to fight the battles of the Commonwealth had for some time past been continually on the increase; and several of the mischiefs arising from it have already been seen in the conduct of the wars, in which Florence has been engaged. But much worse consequences were behind; and now one among these was beginning to make itself felt, not by Florence only, but by

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A.D. 1353. every State in Italy, in a truly alarming manner. The demand for these mercenary troops,—a demand which, as we have seen, preferred strangers from beyond the Alps,—had filled Italy with bands of free lances, ready to take service with any tyrant, or any free city that was willing to pay them. They passed from one service to another, and from one side of a quarrel to the other with the utmost indifference and impartiality. But from this manner of life to setting up for themselves and warring for their own behoof there was but one step. And no prudent man could have doubted that this step would ere long be taken. Every circumstance of the age and country combined to invite and facilitate it. The country in which these northern strangers found themselves quartered was abounding in all things that were to them not only the necessaries but also the luxuries of life, and was thickly studded with cities rich in all that could tempt their cupidity. The inhabitants and owners of all this wealth were avowedly, even according to their own estimation of themselves, less strong or less warlike than the hungry strangers, who had been so imprudently called from their poorer homes to the north of the mountains; and to complete the combination of favourable circumstances, the country was so divided into small communities and principalities, some of which were sure to be always at war with their neighbours, that the free lances might with perfect security count not only on the inability of each separate State to resist them, but on the chances that some one or other of the different governments would at any moment be found ready to protect them, and extend to them the support of such legality as would be imparted to their status and actions by employing them in regular warfare.

Already symptoms of this highly dangerous mischief had shown themselves in the case of that German band of deserters from the Imperial standard, who had made them-

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selves masters of Lucca, and absolutely put the city up to public sale. Already, immediately after the fall of the Duke of Athens, a German adventurer, one Werner, known in Italian history as the Duke Guarnieri, had induced a large number of the hired troops, who were then "unattached" in Italy, mainly those dismissed at that time from the service of Pisa, to form themselves into an independent company and recognize him as their leader. With equal effrontery and accuracy this ruffian styled himself "The enemy of God, of Pity, and of Mercy," and with hideous cynicism absolutely labelled himself as such, wearing, we are told, on his breast, a silver badge, on which these detestable titles were engraved.* This gang of bandits numbered more than two thousand horsemen. Their first exploit was to threaten the city of Siena. Advancing through the Sienese territory towards the city, plundering, killing, and burning indiscriminately as they went, they inspired so sudden and universal a terror, that the city was glad to buy them off with a sum of twelve thousand florins. From the Sienese territory they passed to that of Arezzo, and thence to the district around Perugia; and then turning towards the Adriatic, overran Romagna and the Rimini country, then governed by the Malatesta family. It is difficult adequately to describe, or even to conceive the sufferings, the destruction, the panic, the horror which marked the track of such a body of miscreants, whose only law was an obedience to their chiefs, which in no degree interfered with the utmost license and outrage, which it might please each individual of the horde to exercise on the unresisting populations. Taddeo Pepoli, who was then Lord of Bologna, as soon as it became evident that the band was moving northwards, got together in all haste the largest force he could, and guarded the

A.D. 1353.

* Istoria Pistolesi. Muratori Rev. Ital. Script. tom. xi. p. 489 D.

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A.D. 1353 passes with sufficient efficacy to check the advance of the brigands. But having thus gained time, he treated with them. The sum of money they demanded as the price of taking themselves off was larger than Pepoli could pay, or than he chose to pay. But he lost no time in communicating with the rulers of the small principalities of Lombardy, who readily perceived and admitted that they were all equally concerned in getting rid of Guarnieri and his horde of cut-throats. The sum of money demanded was therefore made up between them, and conditions for the payment of it were made with the brigands, who were beginning to be pressed by want of food. These terms were as prudently conceived as they could have been under the circumstances. Forty hostages of the principal leaders of the band were taken, and sent in safe custody to Ferrara. Then the entire gang was divided into companies; and the proportion of the money coming to each was paid first to one of these divisions, which was required to cross the Alps before the money was forthcoming for the second, and so on. And thus Italy was delivered from the first of these devastating hosts. But the relief was obtained in a manner which was sure to operate as an encouragement to the formation of other similar bands.

And now, after the proclamation of the peace between Florence and the Visconti, on the 1st of April, 1353, as related at the end of the last chapter, the experiment which had answered so well in the hands of the German "Enemy to God and to Mercy," was repeated on a larger scale by a French Knight Hospitaller of the name of Montreal, known in Italian history as Frà Moriale. He had served under the King of Hungary in the war waged by that potentate against his cousin Giovanna of Naples, and afterwards had taken the pay of an usurper known as the Prefect of Vico, who had made himself master of Viterbo and Orvieto. But now, being out of place, it occurred to him to collect

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all the fighting men in Italy, who were similarly circumstanced, and form an independent company after the example of Guarnieri, with the avowed purpose of living by plunder and brigandage. He was so successful that he collected in a very short time fifteen hundred men-at-arms,* and two thousand foot-soldiers; who were subsequently increased to five thousand cavaliers and seven thousand infantry; and this band was known as "the Great Company."† A.D. 1354.

The first exploit of this new Company was to attack Malatesta, who had been the victim also of Guarnieri, and to overrun the district around Rimini. Malatesta seems to have felt that the only prudent thing was to fight, and not pay these insatiable marauders; and he endeavoured to persuade the Communes of Florence, Siena, and Perugia to join with him in an effort to exterminate them. Florence was willing to undertake her share of the enterprise. But the other two Communes, with truly selfish and yet more shortsighted parsimony and want of energy, were unwilling to do anything until they were absolutely attacked. Perugia especially could not be induced to move in the matter; and nothing had been done when the Company, having squeezed all they could from the Romagna, marched into the valley of the Chiana, and thence into the Sienese and Florentine territory. The result was that the Florentines were obliged to buy off the terrible Frà Moriale with a bribe of 28,000 florins, and Pisa with one of 16,000. It would seem as if Siena escaped at the price of supplying rations to the Company, and allowing them free passage across the Sienese territory on their way to invade that of Florence. The sum agreed upon was paid at Montevarchi; three thousand florins of the amount being given secretly

* "Barbute." The literal translation is "helmeted men;" *i.e.*, men in armour; cavalry as opposed to the "masnadieri."

† Matteo Villani, book iii. chap. lxxxix.; Ammirato, book xi. Conf. 370.

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A.D. 1356. to the leaders, who thus cheated their own men, while plundering the rest of the world.*

The chief of these leaders, after Frà Moriale himself, was one Conrad, Count of Lando; and under him the Company marched towards Lombardy in search of fresh booty, while Moriale himself, remaining temporarily behind, went to Rome to confer privately, as it was believed, with the Colonna chiefs respecting a project of employing his band against Rienzi, the tribune. But whether such was the object of his journey to Rome or not, it was fatal to the brigand chief. For Rienzi no sooner knew that the notorious Frà Moriale was within his jurisdiction, than he arrested him, and summarily ordered him to execution as a common malefactor.†

The death of the chief however did not put an end to "the Great Company;" for Conrad of Lando remained, and succeeded to the command of it. In the year 1356 he led his followers southwards into Romagna for the purpose of attacking Cardinal Albornoz, the Papal Legate, at the instigation of Bernabò Visconti. But it was impossible that tens of thousands of lawless ruffians should traverse the country, even on a stated mission, without danger and terror to every surrounding district. And the Florentines, on hearing that the Company was coming southwards, thought it necessary to send troops to guard the passes of the Apennines, lest the brigands should be tempted to turn aside from their way towards Romagna into the rich valley of the Mugello. This was effectually done with the assistance of the Ubaldini, whose castles, as we have seen, were in that part of the Apennine. The last time we heard of them, only five years before the date of these events, they were at war with Florence, and were severely punished by the forces of the Commonwealth. But upon this occasion

* Ammirato, book xi. Gonf. 373. † *Ibid.*

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they joined with their old foes for their common protection against the enemy of all who had anything to lose. A.D. 1356.

And presently a cry for help against the avalanche of miscreants came from the Legate. The Bishop of Narni, who happened to be a Florentine, was sent into Tuscany to preach a crusade against Count Lando and his men; and the Pope wrote a letter to the Signory exhorting them to do all in their power to help the cause. The Bishop disposed of indulgences to the amount of 30,000 golden florins, among "the women and poor* people;" and in order to bring the advantages of the crusade within the means of all classes, as the projectors of joint-stock schemes say, he proclaimed that any twelve persons, who would club together to maintain a cavalier in the force to be raised against the Company, should all partake in the benefits promised to crusaders. The Signory for their part sent to the aid of the Legate a force of seven hundred men-at-arms, and eight hundred cross-bowmen, and insinuated to him, at the same time, that since he was inclined to be so liberal with his indulgences, the crusading privileges might as well "be understood to be general for all the city."†

After all this preparation, it may be imagined how great was the disgust and astonishment of the Florentines at hearing that the Legate, instead of fighting the bandits, had suddenly made a bargain with them. He undertook to pay them 30,000 golden florins, on the understanding —(as if any trust could be placed in such men)—that for the next three years the Company was not to molest the States of the Church, nor the territory of Florence, nor that of Siena or Perugia. It appeared very kind of the Cardinal Legate to think of his friends in this manner, when he was making his bargain. But the Cardinal

* Ammirato, book xi. Gonf. 391. † *Ibid.*

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A.D. 1356. hastened to inform the three Communes, that it was of course understood that they were to pay their share of the bribe. Florence was informed that her share came to just 16,000 florins out of the thirty! Florence, as usual, —(very much after the fashion of a certain other wealthy commercial community the world has known)—grumbled and paid. But Siena and Perugia, who could not shovel over their thousands of florins so easily, said that they had given the Cardinal no commission to spend their money for them; that when they wished him to manage their affairs in their stead, they would let him know; but meanwhile should decline paying any part of the bribe he had thought fit to offer to the brigand army.

But, as might have been easily foreseen, this mode of dealing with "the Great Company" was not calculated to put an end to the troubles occasioned by it, which returned shortly afterwards, "as it were, according to a regular cycle," as the historian expresses it.* But the story of the next proceedings of the Company, which has now to be told, throws an instructive light on the state of the moral sentiments prevailing at that period, and serves to show abundantly that the Italian communities were not so much subjected by their physical weakness to the calamities inflicted on them by these outlaw bands of miscreants, as they were accomplices in all the evils arising from them, by reason of their readiness to make use of them for their own purposes, when the occasion offered itself, and by the sort of estimation with which the public conscience regarded them. Indeed the moral conscience of mankind has been improved by very slow degrees in this matter, and the improvement has advanced from below upwards in the social scale. Half-civilized societies admire and respect only physical force and violence. A

* Ammirato, book xi. Conf. 397.

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poor Egyptian fellah expressed his admiration for a high-handed ruffian of the privileged caste above him by saying, in broken English to a travelling stranger, that he was "a highly respectable man; for he had killed his cook!" In the earliest centuries after the thousandth year of our era, a very similar estimate prevailed in western Europe. The man who could and did kill others was the respectable man. Fighting in whatever cause was the only honourable profession. In times with which this history was concerned, low-born trading burghers had begun to form a different estimate. But it is curiously shown, by the events to be narrated, that well-born knights still had a fellow feeling and sympathy for the ruffians whose pursuits and occupations bore a close resemblance to their own. A similar prejudice may be traced, gradually becoming weaker as the centuries rolled on, in all the communities of western Europe, still holding its place the most forcibly in those societies which lagged most in the march of improvement. At the present day it may be fairly hoped that no consciences, save those of a monarch by right divine, or a priest-king by divine appointment, and their immediate satellites, would consent to the use and patronage of agents of the same class with the cut-throats of "the Great Company." A.D. 1358.

In 1358 Siena, being at war with Perugia, had engaged the assistance of the Company. That body was then under the command of a certain Count Broccardo and one Amerigo del Cavaletto during the temporary absence of Count Lando, who had gone to Germany to have an interview with the Emperor concerning certain schemes, which the lay head of Christendom and the bandit chief were concocting together. The Company was at that time in Romagna, on the confines of the Bolognese district; and in order to get to their new patrons, the Sienese, it was necessary to cross the territory of Florence. The

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A.D. 1358. leaders sent messengers to the Signory to ask permission to do so. But the demand was extremely embarrassing to the Florentines, especially as it was July, and "the grain was all on the threshing-floors."* They despatched a messenger in reply, to say that the army might pass on condition that they should do so by divisions of only ten banners at a time, and that they should pay for whatever they required. The free-band captains answered to this, that they would not receive instructions from the Florentines as to their mode of proceeding, but demanded an unconditional right of passage. This demand seemed the more insolent and unreasonable, seeing that the three years, during which, according to the convention with the Company made by the Legate, and paid for by Florence, the Commonwealth was not to be molested in any way by the freebooters, were not yet expired. So the Signory produced the duly executed text of the treaty, and sent four citizens, "men of great authority, and not ignorant of military affairs," to remonstrate with the captains. The ambassadors were Manno Donati, Giovanni de' Medici, Amerigo Cavalcanti, and Rinieri Peruzzi. With marvellous simplicity and puerility, as it cannot but seem to modern ideas, they exhibited their treaty with all diplomatic solemnity; and, of course, were laughed at for their pains. The only reply of the freebooters was, that if the permission to pass were not given them, they should take it. On hearing this the Signory wrote to the Ubaldini in the Mugello, and to the other territorial nobles then in friendship with the Commune, begging them to guard the passes with all their forces, and also sent both cavalry and infantry from the city for the same purpose. They, moreover, publicly recalled their ambassadors; but, at the

* Ammirato, book xi. Gonf. 397. The threshing-floors in Tuscany are bricked areas in the open air, prepared in the neighbourhood of every farmhouse for the purpose.

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same time, as one regrets to read, privately sent Filippo Machiavelli, an ancestor of the famous secretary, with orders to buy off the threatened invasion, if he could do so for five or, at the outside, for six thousand florins; an offer which was contemptuously rejected. A.D. 1358.

But just at this juncture Count Lando returned from Germany, bringing with him an appointment from the Emperor as his Vicar of Pisa. The real views, however, of the Emperor and his bandit friend were directed to much larger objects. The project was that Lando should gradually ally himself with all the Ghibelline elements in Tuscany, and eventually make himself Lord of the whole province, at the same time reducing it to the condition of an Imperial fief. With such views as these, it evidently was not his game to rush into hostility not only with Florence, but also with the nobles who were on friendly terms with the Commonwealth, and through whose lands he must also pass. So when he heard at Bologna the state of the dispute between his Company and Florence, he rode on in all haste, and loudly declared that he would by no means permit the Florentine territory to be infringed without the permission of the Signory; and that it must be seen whether terms of agreement could not be come to on the subject. Under the circumstances the four Florentine ambassadors judged it best to remain at the head-quarters of the Company, even though, strictly speaking, they had no power to enter on any further negotiations.

After a good deal of debate, it was agreed that the Company should pass by a certain route, accurately specified, which would take them through only some small out-lying portion of the Florentine territory, and would bring them across the mountains to Bibbiena, in the Casentino. It was also arranged that for the five days, which this march would occupy, provisions should be supplied by the Signory, to be paid for by the Company. The first day's

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A.D 1358. march was made in accordance with this programme; and all would doubtless have passed off quietly, if the free-booters could have abstained from their usual habits and practices. But this was far from being the case. Not content with the rations provided for them, they plundered the country in all directions, and outraged the inhabitants in every possible manner. And the anger of the population among whom their track lay, was increased by the utter absence of any attempt on the part of the leaders to repress or punish these outrages. Doubtless they dared not do so; and such an innovation on the usages of that brigand camp would have in all probability served only to destroy such authority as the chiefs possessed.

The second day's march took the bandit army through some narrow defiles in the mountains, which seemed to have suggested to the enraged inhabitants a scheme of vengeance on the intruders. A rumour of some attempt of the kind had reached the ears of Count Lando on the evening of the first day's march. But not attributing much importance to the ill will of a crowd of unarmed peasants, he contented himself with arranging his line of march for the next day as follows. Amerigo del Cavaletto was to lead the vanguard, taking with him three of the four Florentine ambassadors, whom Lando "had retained rather for his own protection, than in obedience to any desires of the Commonwealth to that effect." A second body, consisting of the principal part of the Company, with all the baggage, marched next under the command of Lando himself. And the rear-guard, consisting of eight hundred horsemen and five thousand infantry, together with the fourth Florentine ambassador, followed under the orders of Count Broccardo.

In this order the second day's march commenced, and the defiles, through hollow gorges of the Apennine overhung by precipices on either side, were entered. Amerigo

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and his vanguard passed safely; for the peasants, who had collected during the previous night, had not reached the tops of the precipices in time to molest them. But when the main body, under Count Lando, had advanced into the middle of the ravine, a shower of stones from the tops of the overhanging rocks threw the first rank into disorder. The Count endeavoured to encourage his men to rush onwards; but an avalanche of huge rocks, set rolling by the united force of many arms, entirely blocked up the passage. Count Broccardo, hurrying up with the rear-guard, and pressing forward to ascertain what was wrong in front, was killed, man and horse, by a huge stone, which had required the labour of many peasants to loosen it from its place in the side of the mountain, and which as effectually closed the way of retreat, as that in advance had already been cut off. Count Lando finding himself thus shut in and imprisoned, strove to encourage his men to climb the rocks and dislodge the peasants with their cross-bows. But the attempt was vain. The heavily armed men could not gain any position from which they could injure their enemies. Under these circumstances, the panic and confusion in the bandit army became complete. Great numbers of horses were left riderless, whose masters had either been overwhelmed by the storm of stones, or had abandoned them in the hope of escaping on foot. A.D 1358.

The helpless condition of the brigands was such, that the peasants were emboldened to descend from the precipices and attack them hand to hand in the ravines, and Lando himself was surrounded and taken prisoner, badly wounded by a blow on the head. When this was perceived by the rest of the army, the feeble attempt at defending themselves, which they had hitherto made, was abandoned, and every man sought only for the means of escape. "It may seem a strange thing to tell," says Ammirato; "but it was the fact, that many, both of the



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A.D. 1358. cavaliers and foot soldiers, were made prisoners by the women, who had accompanied their husbands to assist in rolling down the stones from the hills, and who despoiled their captives of their silver girdles, of their money, and equipments to a very considerable value. Three hundred of the brigands were killed, and more than a thousand war-horses, and three hundred pack-horses, and a very large quantity of gold and silver, the produce of former plundering, fell into the hands of the peasants.

"And," says the historian, "that plague of Italy might then have been easily extinguished, if the Florentine ambassadors had not, out of consideration for their own safety, interfered to stay the furious onslaught of the peasantry. In truth, their position was a sufficiently critical one. Three of them, it will be remembered, were with Amerigo del Cavaletto and the vanguard who had safely passed the defile. But when he became aware of what was happening behind him, he turned back in order to attempt the extrication of the main body of the army; and at the same time threatened the ambassadors with instant death if they did not put an end to the attack of the peasants. "So that," says Ammirato, "the ambassadors, to save their own lives, assumed an authority to which they had no title,"—(inasmuch as they had been formerly recalled, and moreover, the attacking party of peasants were mainly, if not wholly, subjects of the Count Guidi, and not of the Commonwealth);—"and earnestly commanded the Guidi vassals to abstain from molesting the soldiers of the Company, as they valued the friendship of Florence, inasmuch as they, the ambassadors, were there for no other purpose than to assure them a safe conduct." In this manner the ambassadors succeeded in getting the great body of the Company with the second in command, Amerigo del Cavaletto, in safety to the neighbouring town and castle of Dicomano in the Val di Sieve. Count Lando

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had been carried off by the peasants who had captured him, and lodged in safe custody in Castel Pagano, a fortress belonging to the Ubaldini. A.D. 1358.

As soon as the news of these events reached Florence, a great council was called, to which the Signory invited not only the Senators, but almost all the other citizens of note, and a very warm debate ensued, as to the steps to be taken with regard to the Company. A large party in the Council held that no faith was to be kept with a gang of robbers and assassins; and that in any case they had forfeited all right to appeal to the terms which had been made with them, having themselves broken them by having been guilty of outrages on the peasantry. It was, however, strongly urged by others that nothing should be done which could cast even the shadow of a doubt on the good faith of the Commonwealth. Finally, it was decided that the passes leading into the Florentine territory should be guarded, and all passage peremptorily denied to the free-booters; further, that no supplies of food should be furnished to them; and that nothing should be done to prevent anybody from attacking them who chose to do so.

If these resolutions, of which it could hardly be said that they in anywise contravened either the letter or the spirit of the terms which had been arranged between the Company and the Commonwealth, had been fully carried out, there would have been an end to the great Company. For the men had food but for three days in Dicomano; they were hemmed round on all sides by the inhabitants and the armed vassals of the Ubaldini and Guidi; and the peasants could scarcely be restrained from making a general massacre of them. But had such been the upshot, the unfortunate ambassadors would unquestionably have perished also. Amerigo del Cavaletto never ceased to assure them, that the first sign of an attack on his men should be the signal for their death. They sent a messenger to



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A.D. 1358. Florence urging the government to give orders for the safe conduct of the freebooters to some place of safety, with an earnestness which in fact was pleading for their own lives. The Signory assembled the Senate at three successive sittings to debate on the subject, and take into consideration the position of their ambassadors. But no modification of the original determination could be obtained from the Council.

Under these circumstances the ambassadors took upon themselves to order the captain of the Florentine troops, sent to guard the passes leading to the Valdarno, to accompany and guard the freebooters as far as Vicchio, another small town in the Magello. This man, who was himself a German, and unwilling to see his compatriots of the bandit army (for they were almost all Germans) utterly destroyed, complied with this order. And at Vicchio the bandit army was able to obtain food, and thence on the next day but one, to escape across the Apennines by a forced march of forty-two miles to the district of Imola in the Romagna. And thus the evil was got rid of for the time; but, both the peasantry and the Ubaldini and Guidi grumbled much at their prey being thus taken out of their hands.

Count Lando meanwhile was liberated from his prison by the Ubaldini, at the intercession of Giovanni Visconti da Oleggio, then Lord of Bologna, whose conduct in the matter contrasts very unfavourably with that of the tribune Rienzi towards Frà Moriale; and places in a striking light the much stronger sympathy and fellow-feeling there was between these nobly born cut-throat robbers and the princelings, whose pursuits and occupations differed so little from their own, than between the latter and the interests and requirements of law, order, and civilization.*

* Ammirato, book xi. Gonf. 397.

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But the troubles, which Count Lando and his company caused the Commonwealth were not yet at an end. Although it was due to the moderation of Florence, and the protection of Florentine citizens, that the entire company had not been exterminated, the humiliation which the bandits had received rankled in their minds; and the danger that they might return across the mountains to avenge their late discomfiture, made it prudent for the Commonwealth to keep the passes well guarded; and in one special locality, called the pass of the Stale,* to execute for the same purpose permanent works of fortification. A.D. 1359.

In 1359, Cardinal Albornoz, who in the previous year had returned a second time as Papal Legate to Romagna, finding himself embarrassed by the presence of the free-booters, and remembering how conveniently he had on a former occasion bought off the annoyance, and then saddled the main part of the cost on the Florentines, thought he would repeat an experiment which had answered so well. So he made a bargain with the Company, who engaged to take themselves off for four years for 125,000 golden florins; and then quietly informed the Signory of what he had done, and told them that their share of the bribe came to 80,000 florins. But the Florentines were not in a humour to suffer a second time in the same manner as they had done before. So the Signory, with the full approbation of the citizens, sent an embassy to the Legate, charged to inform him that "the Florentine Commonwealth was by no means minded to suffer itself to be further pillaged by Count Lando; that it had suffered enough already; and that it was disposed to undergo any expense, however large, to exert its utmost strength, and

* A corruption of Ospitale. Many spots are so called in Tuscany, from the hospitals which once existed there for the reception of poor travellers, especially on the more desolate parts of the passes of the Apennines.

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A.D. 1359. to turn out in arms to its last man, rather than pay a farthing to so vile a foe." The Legate, however, who was anxious, at any cost, to get rid of the free lances out of Romagna, made a separate bargain with them on his own behalf for 50,000 florins. Perugia, following his example, agreed to pay them 4000 florins a-year for five years, to feed them gratis for three days, and to grant them a free passage across the territory of Perugia, whenever they might require it. Siena and Pisa followed the example, and each paid their black mail. Florence, therefore, stood alone in her resistance to the formidable freebooters. "But the Florentines, thus left wholly unsupported, did not lose heart, notwithstanding that there occurred at that time, both in the city and in the country around, an unusual number of fearful and monstrous births—of forms widely differing from the normal human shape." *

It is difficult to imagine why these phenomena should have been held to convey to the Florentines an intimation that they should not resist the impositions of Count Lando, rather than that they should do so. It seems, however, from the language of the historian, that no doubt was felt on this point. But the warning was nevertheless disregarded. The Florentines mustered their forces despite the mal-formed babies, and were able to send into the field two thousand men-at-arms, all tried troops; five hundred Hungarians, and two thousand five hundred cross-bowmen, "all armed with cuirasses," besides the native troops of the city. They received aid, too, from unexpected quarters: a thousand men-at-arms, and a thousand foot-soldiers from Bernato Visconti, who had quarrelled *à outrance* with the Company; two hundred cavaliers from Francesco Carrara, Lord of Padua; and three hundred from the Marchese di Este. Besides all these the Commonwealth also hired more troops.

* Ammirato, book xi. Gonf. 401.

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The Captains of the Company were at this time in treaty with the Marquis of Montferrat, who wanted their services for a war between him and Milan; and they required permission to pass through the Florentine territory for the purpose of joining him. So Count Lando, having little desire to come to blows with such a force as that which the Florentines had collected, sent to Florence to offer peace and amity on the sole condition of being allowed to pass freely on his way northwards. His messengers on this occasion were the envoys of the Marquis of Montferrat, who were with him for the arrangement of the terms of his engagement to their master. The Perugians also sent some of their principal citizens to intercede with the Florentines, and persuade them that it was much better to let the freebooters proceed on their way and be gone, rather than enter on a gratuitous and doubtful campaign. Many of the wealthier citizens of Florence were also urgent on the same side. But the people, whose anger against the bandits was thoroughly roused, would hear of no sort of compromise; and for all answer to the brigand Count's overtures for peace, made public proclamation, setting a price of five thousand florins on his head. A.D. 1359.

On the 29th of June, 1359, Pandolfo Malatesta, Captain-General of the Florentine forces, marched out of the city at the head of the army. The Company was then at Buonconvento, twelve miles to the south of Siena. Lando, evidently not wanting to fight if he could avoid it, led his forces by a long circuit, leaving Siena to his right, so as to get on to the Pisan territory without touching that of Florence. So, continually skirting the Florentine frontier, he proceeded into the Lucchese district. During the whole of his march the Florentines had followed him on their side of the frontier, continually but vainly provoking him to battle. On the 10th of July he pitched his camp

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A.D. 1359. in the Valdinievole, at a spot called Pieve di Nievole, close to the Florentine frontier, between Pistoia and Pescia. There was a small plain just in front of his camping ground; and Malatesta took up his quarters on the opposite side of this, in such sort that Lando could hardly refuse to fight without losing credit. He therefore chose to assume the offensive, and sent his trumpeters with a bloody glove on a willow wand, and a vaunting letter, bidding Malatesta accept the gage if he dared. The Florentine general was not slow to take the glove from the wand; and the next few days were employed in manœuvring the armies with a view to an engagement, for which the brigand chief still seemed by no means eager. At length, on the 20th of July, the two armies were in such a position that it was impossible for the brigand general to avoid an engagement; and it was thought in the Florentine camp that a decisive battle would be fought on the morrow. But when that July morning dawned, Lando and his bandit host were already in full march northwards towards Genoa, with a precipitation that had all the appearance of flight.*

The Florentine general had on this occasion, by an exception to what we have seen to have unfortunately been the practice of the Commonwealth in such matters, had full discretionary powers to conduct the campaign as he judged best. One only restriction had been placed upon him,—that he was on no account to violate the territory of Pisa or Lucca. And this provision made it impossible for him to pursue the enemy in his flight. "But such had been the ardour, and at the same time the prudence of Malatesta, and so great the valour of those citizens, at last thoroughly roused, and displayed in their determination to settle matters once for all with so infamous an enemy, that

* Matteo Villani, books viii. ix.

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the Great Company never again dared to show its face in Tuscany." * And Florence at last learned that fighting, and not paying, was the only mode of dealing with such a pestilence. A.D. 1355.

In the meantime an Emperor had once again made his appearance in Italy. Charles of Luxembourg, King of Bohemia, crowned King of Germany and King of the Romans at Bonn, in November, 1346, arrived at Pisa on the 18th of January, 1355, on his way to Rome to be crowned Emperor, which ceremony was duly accomplished on the following 5th of April. These recurring imperial appearances on the Italian horizon were always, as those of comets and meteors were imagined to be, portentous of trouble and mischief. The visits of freebooting brigand generals and of right-divine German Emperors, were equally unacceptable to the burgher community on the banks of the Arno; and for the most part equally tended to, and ended in, the disbursement of cash. Notwithstanding the complete practical independence in all ways and to all intents and purposes of the Florentine Commonwealth, and the perfect determination of the citizens to permit no feudal superior to interfere with their liberty, there was yet a half-admitted theoretical idea, that the Emperor really had certain vague and ill-defined rights over them; and the consciousness of this is always more or less apparent in the dealings of the Commonwealth with its imperial visitors. But at the period subsequent to Henry of Luxembourg, the main object of these visits and the method followed by the imperial visitors, remind one of the practice of one of those old-world Irish landlords, who used every now and then, when they stood in need of money, to ride round their estates, and squeeze out of the tenants as much as they could, without any very accurate

* Ammirato, book xi. Conf. 403.

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A.D. 1355. reference by either party to the strict terms of the lease, or the exact state of the account between them. The main object of an imperial progress through Italy, beyond that of obtaining the imperial title by the ceremony of coronation at Rome, was at the period in question very similar.

The first care of the Florentines on the present occasion was to send an ambassador,—who was no other than Giovanni Boccaccio,—to the Pope at Avignon, to ascertain whether the Emperor was coming to Italy with the Holy Father's approbation. The reply was, that Charles had the full sanction and approval of the Papal Court; that he came to Italy in friendly and peaceful guise; and was animated by the best possible intentions towards everybody in general and the Florentines in particular. This seemed to promise that matters would go on quietly; and that, beyond the inevitable necessity of having to put their hands rather deeply into their pockets, the imperial visit might pass over without trouble. But if the Florentines could have drawn from the history of the centuries through which the Commonwealth had already passed, those warnings for the future, which it now seems to us easy to have read in them, they would have mistrusted this amiable understanding between the two great tyrannies. Betwixt these two, as betwixt the upper and the nether mill-stone, they were destined eventually to have the life ground out of them; and the most portentous symptom of future evil to themselves, and to mankind in general, which had ever yet appeared on the political horizon, was this friendliness between the spiritual and the lay "head of Christendom."

The Commonwealth, however, having received the above answer from the Pope, sent an embassy to the Emperor to ascertain what were his intentions with regard to Florence. Charles replied that he was animated by sentiments of the warmest regard for the Florentines; that he had no wish to interfere with their possessions or liberties in any way;

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that all he asked of them was to recognise him as Emperor, and to let it appear that they approved of his coming into Italy. On receiving these assurances the Commonwealth sent again to the Pope, promising to act towards the Emperor according to his wishes; but at the same time intimating, notwithstanding the warmth of the Emperor's friendly sentiments towards Florence, that "they did not intend that he should come near the city." They thought it prudent also at the same time to appoint sixteen officials to travel through the territory of the Commonwealth in every direction, to enjoin on the inhabitants and superintend the removal of all provisions and other valuable property to the interior of the walled towns: measures which do not indicate any very firm reliance on the imperial sentiments of regard. A.D. 1355.

As soon as Charles reached Pisa, the Florentines sent an embassy to him to congratulate him on his arrival in Italy, to protest their devotion to him, and "to make him offers of service, keeping to general terms, which should not be in any way binding." * The spokesman of the embassy, however, "addressed Cæsar with very little reverence, either from the natural manner of the Florentines, little accustomed to flatter anybody with fine words, and wont to retain, even to the present day, the rough simplicity of the old Italian manners, by reason of the little conversation they have with strangers; † or, because he imagined that he was so best conforming himself to the intentions of his government." ‡ And the barons of the imperial court, the historian goes on to relate, were so scandalised at this republican rudeness, that they would have laid hands on the ambassadors then and there, if the

* Ammirato, book xi. Gonf. 376.

† It is curious to read a character of the Florentine so diametrically opposed to what anybody would say of them five hundred years later.

‡ Ammirato, book xi. Gonf. 376.

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A.D. 1355. Emperor had not bade them remember, that let them behave as they might the lives of ambassadors were always sacred.

At last, however, after long debate and hard bargaining, after much going backwards and forwards between Pisa and Florence, and considerable difficulty in getting the popular portion of the council to agree to the terms, the real business in hand was thus settled. The Emperor confirmed all the franchises, privileges, and liberties of the Commonwealth; revoked all condemnations and sentences at any time pronounced against the city, or any of the inhabitants by former Emperors; and promised not to interfere in any way with the free action of the government. The Florentines, on their part, undertook to pay the Emperor 100,000 golden florins down, and 4000 a year for his life.

The Emperor further engaged, that neither he nor any of his people should approach within ten miles of the city of Florence. But his Majesty was urgent that this promise should not appear in the written contract between him and the Florentines, as being a stipulation that did not sound * well for the imperial Majesty to make. He was willing, however, to promise so much to the Florentines by word of mouth, there as he stood in the Gambucorti garden at Pisa; a dark-complexioned, black-bearded man, so stooping and high-shouldered as to seem half-hunchbacked, with prominent cheek bones, big eyes, and a bold forehead; dressed in plain close-buttoned clothes void of all ornament; and whittling a willow wand, as his manner was, while his restless eyes took note of everything within their range; and he was, nevertheless, deeply attentive all the time to what was being said to him. For so Matteo Villani † has photographed him for any reader who may be curious in Emperors.

* "Non dicevole." † Book iv. chap. lxxix.

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Before he departed, Charles wanted the Florentines to make a league with him against the Visconti. But this they declined, "being anxious just then to have peace abroad," says Ammirato, "that they might have leisure to fight with each other at home;" * an imputation, which the history of the Commonwealth for the next twenty years abundantly justifies. A.D. 1355.

* Ammirato, book xi. Conf. 377.

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# CHAPTER VII.

The Florentines managed their foreign better than their domestic affairs—Cause of this—Nations as well as individuals make their own fate—*Capitani di parte Guelfa*—Their inordinate power—Reign of terror—Condemnations by the *Capitani*—Peter Strozzi's safeguard against lightning—Port of Telamone—*Dieci del Mare*—War with Pisa—Zato Passavanti—Bonifaccio Lupo, General of the Florentine troops—Superseded by Rodolfo Varano—Successes of the Florentine troops—Iron chains at Porto Pisano carried to Florence—Rodolfo Varano superseded by Piero Farnese—Negotiation for the hire of English mercenaries—They are not engaged—Defeat of the Pisans at Bagno a Vera—Pestilence again rages in Italy—Second defeat of the Pisans beneath the walls of Pisa—Death of Farnese by pestilence—And of the historian, Matteo Villani, from the same cause—Rinuccio Farnese made General—Superseded by Pandulfo Malatesta—Reinforced by the English troops, the Pisans are victorious; and run races under the walls of Florence—Vicinity of Florence ravaged—Florentines engage German mercenaries—English in the Pisan service take Malatesta's camp, and route the Florentines—Distrust of the General Malatesta—Pisans engage other English under Sir John Hawkwood—Equipment of the English troops—Pisans ravage the Valdinievole—And advance to the wall of Florence—Repulsed by De Montfort—De Montfort takes Leghorn and Porto Pisano—Florentines engage Galeotto Malatesta, as their General—Large powers granted to him—He defeats the Pisans at Cascina, near Pisa—Pisan prisoners carried to Florence—Peace between the two cities—Florentines refuse to join a league with the Pope against Bernabo Visconti—Emperor again in Italy—Character of the Papacy modified by its sojourn at Avignon—Negotiations with the Emperor—The Florentines pay him 50,000 florins—Sanminiato revolts against Florence — Bernabo Visconti threatens Florence — Firmness of the popular government—Florentines defeated by Hawkwood in the service of Visconti, near Pontadera—Hawkwood and his troops cross the Apennines—Florentines make alliance with the Pope—Send an army into Lombardy under Rosso de Ricci—Are defeated near Mirandola—Peace with Visconti—Lucca restored to liberty by the Florentines—Troubles arising from the free companies of troops—Cardinal Sant Angelo incites Hawkwood to invade the Florentine territory—The

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Florentines agree to pay Hawkwood 130,000 florins—Having discovered the treachery of the Cardinal, they make war against the Church—Send ambassadors to the Roman Court—Bold language of Donato Barbadori—Florence placed under interdict—The Florentines engage Hawkwood—Compel the priests to officiate, despite the interdict—Peace with the new Pope in 1378—Internal discord. A.D. 1359.

It is remarkable, that during the whole course of the popular government of Florence, the foreign affairs of the Commonwealth were constantly conducted with a far greater amount of ability, uprightness, and patriotism, than those appertaining to the interior. It might have been expected, from the constitution of the government, that the exact reverse would have been the case. It might naturally be imagined that those burghers, traders, and artificers, would have been far more competent to legislate advantageously for the management of their own affairs, and their domestic lives within their own walls, than to conduct the relations of their community with foreign nations and potentates, and maintain the position and standing of the Commonwealth among the rival municipalities and hostile despots of the States around them. But the fact that such was not the case, and the explanation of that fact, bring into notable relief the virtues and the vices of the national character, and go far to justify the belief, that the final ruin of Florentine liberty, and of all that perished with it, was radically caused not so much by force from without, and the combination of disastrous circumstances beyond the control of the people themselves, as by those vices of the citizens, and that lack of patriotism and its concomitant virtues within the walls, of which those unhappy events were but the avenging Nemesis.

*Quisque suæ fortunæ faber!* Conduct makes fate. And perhaps the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach is, that the stern old Stoical maxim merciless as the concatenation of moral cause with moral effect is merciless, is as true of States as of individuals.

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A.D. 1359. These remarks, which may seem to be anticipating the conclusion to which our story is tending, and to have their more fitting place when that conclusion shall have been reached, are offered here because this is the true place for them. *Now* was being worked out in Florence the end that was yet so long in coming. When that end shall have come, when the last desperate struggle against overwhelming force shall have ended in defeat and ruin; if the historian shall be so pitilessly just as to close the story of that lamentable fall with the verdict, that this people succumbed, *not* beneath the revolting alliance of Papal and Imperial tyranny, but beneath the fardel of their own vices,—that they lost their liberty because they were not worthy of liberty,—*then* the pitying reader would point to the desperate tenacity of that last struggle, to the valour, the self-denial, the endurance, that strove to stand up against the crushing weight of the avalanche which was overwhelming Florence; that fought to the death against the inexorable consequences of causes rooted in the irredeemable past, and would question the justice of the assertion, that the Florentines had by their conduct made for themselves the fate that overtook them. *Now* is the time to mark the causes in operation which justify the application of the inexorable law. *Now* the reader, anxious to trace distant results to their causes, may watch the spinning of the filaments that grew into the cord which eventually strangled the life out of those who spun them.

Whence arose the fact, that the burghers of Florence managed the foreign far better than the interior department of their affairs? Simply from this, that the strong and sincere desire for the greatness, the prosperity, and glory of Florence, which was felt by all its citizens, was not in the former case thwarted and counteracted by the hatreds, jealousies, selfish rancours, and love of tyrannical

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power, which destroyed not only the practical working of free government within the city, but the conception of it in the minds of the citizens. When any difficult negotiation or thorny dispute with a foreign power was in hand, the best men whose services the Commonwealth could command were generally chosen to be entrusted with the management of it. There was something of the same sort of feeling, that will make a family, whose members quarrel from morning to night when by themselves in their home, nevertheless endeavour to appear united before the outer world, and consent that their most presentable member shall represent them in their dealings with it. It was in the management of the every-day life within the walls, that the all-consuming desire to rule instead of being ruled, the hatred of submission to arbitary power joined to the love for the exercise of it, produced the vices that made social liberty impossible, and therefore political liberty short-lived in Florence. A.D. 1359.

While the Commonwealth had been engaged in dealing with the brigand army of Count Lando in the successful and creditable manner that has been described in the last chapter, the violence of party hatred within the walls had been culminating in one of those monstrous manifestations of unblushing tyranny, which have sometimes shown that the oppression of a democracy may become more intolerable than that of the worst despotism.

The magistracy called the *Capitani di Parte Guelfa*,—the Captains of the Guelph party,—was instituted in the year 1267; and it was remarked, when the institution of it was recorded, that the conception of a magistracy avowedly formed to govern a community, not only by the authority of, but in the interest of one section only of its members, was an extraordinary proof of the unfitness of the Florentines for self-government, and a forewarning of the infallible certainty that the attempt to rule the Com-



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A.D. 1358. monwealth on such principles would come to a bad ending. In the year 1358, a little less than a century after the first establishment of this strange magistracy, it began to develop the mischievous capabilities inherent in the nature of it, in a very alarming manner. At their first institution the Captains of the Guelph party were empowered to receive and administer, for the benefit of the Commonwealth, all the proceeds of the confiscated property of condemned and exiled Ghibellines. The sums thus falling in became very large; and led to the care and maintenance of the fortresses throughout the territory and of the walls and public buildings of the city, being placed in the hands of these Captains. It is remarkable that the power of this magistracy increased as the reason for its existence became less. Even if at the time when Captains of the Guelph party were first created, there was room for the pretext that the Commonwealth needed some exceptional protection against Ghibelline treason and violence,—though such partisan legislation could never have been the proper means of providing against the evil,—at all events, in the middle of the fourteenth century there was no longer any such danger. The office of the Captains of the Guelph party must have become long before that time a sinecure, if its functions had been confined to their original scope, but its power and attributions increased abusively and gradually, because the character and conception of it fitted it to become an instrument of party warfare and party tyranny.

The number of the Captains of the Guelph party varied at different times from three to nine; and the duration of the office was for two months. In 1358 this magistracy consisted of four members, Guelfo Gherardini, Geri de' Pazzi, Tommaso Brancacci, and Simone Simonetti. These men, "born," says Ammirato,* "for the public ruin, under

* Book iii. Conf. 394.

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pretext of zeal for the Guelph cause,"—which, as far as it meant anything more than a mere senseless faction watch-word, meant the cause of the populace as against the rich and the great,—caused a law to be passed, according to which any citizen or Florentine subject who had ever held, or should thereafter hold, any office in the Commonwealth, might be either openly or secretly accused before the tribunal of the Captains of the Guelph party of being Ghibelline, or *not genuine Guelph*. If the accusation was supported by six witnesses worthy of belief, the accused might be condemned to death or to fine at the discretion of the Captains. In either case the person so condemned, and his descendants, were for ever incapacited for holding any office in the State. No proof in support of the innocence of the accused, or in opposition to the assertion of the witnesses, could be received. A.D. 1358.

A more tremendous engine of oppression and tyranny than such a law as this was surely never devised. It was a "law of the suspected" in its worse form. A crime was created, which, consisting of the inmost thoughts and affections of a man's heart, admitted of neither proof nor disproof. Let the accused show undeniably that he was not and never had been Ghibelline by descent or family connection; and it might be replied that he was not a *true Guelph*;—that in his inmost heart he was a Ghibelline, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary.

It will be readily conceived that the passing of such a law, in a city bristling with party hatreds and feuds, was the signal for the commencement of a reign of terror as frightful as any ever produced by the tyranny of either mob or despot. The Gonfaloniere and Priors made a feeble attempt to resist the passing of the law. But when the Captains raised a cry that the Signory resisted the law, in all probability because their consciences whispered to



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A.D. 1358. them that they had reason to fear its action themselves, they hastened to withdraw from the post of danger they had taken up.

The law was definitively passed; and, disgraceful as it was to the concoctors and promoters of it, it was assuredly not less so to the community which tolerated it. The panic terror in the city at once became intense, and exhibited symptoms of the worst and most degrading kind. Rumours were rife throughout the town that a vast number of names had already been registered by the irresponsible tribunal as suspected of Ghibellinism. Each man thought over all his past life to discover, not whether he had ever shown himself favourable to Ghibelline principles, but whether he had ever rendered himself obnoxious in any way to any one, who might be able to obtain the ear of either of the dread inquisitors. Every man looked on his neighbour with suspicion; and every man feared to allow the slightest manifestation of his misgivings to become visible, lest that fact alone should seem to argue a consciousness of the impalpable and indefinable crime. Many nevertheless, in their servile terror, had recourse to private supplications and intercessions with the men in whose hands were their lives and fortunes. And this was the condition of a social body which deemed itself the uncompromising admirer and champion of civil liberty, and fancied itself the freest people on the face of the earth. This was the due vengeance of indivisible cause and effect visited upon a people among whom any weapon had been held good, by which a party adversary could be struck down, any factious cry acceptable which could be made to serve the purposes of party hate. Truly their sin had found them out!

The inquisitors lost no time in using the terrible weapon which had been put into their hands. But they began with some moderation, "knowing how easily things move

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on when they once get under weigh."* On the 8th of March four citizens, who had held unimportant offices, were accused, and, as a matter of course, condemned; two others on the 18th of the same month; eight on the 5th of April. In the first forty days eighteen condemnations took place; and the scourge was rapidly increasing in intensity. The lives of all these citizens were at the absolute disposal of the Captains of the Guelph party. If that irresponsible magistracy spared them, it was only because it suited their purpose better to fine the victims. They were equally, in either case, incapacitated from holding any office in the Commonwealth; and this appears to have been the principal object with the inquisitors. The intention, in fact, of the new law was to enable one party in the State to gather and keep the whole power of the government in its own hands by means of the gradual proscription of its opponents. The citizen thus proscribed was said to be "admonished;" and the condemnations were called "admonitions;" and henceforward for many years the "*ammonizioni*" play a large part in the domestic history and political struggles of Florence. A.D. 1358.

The reckless audacity of these terrible inquisitors was so great that, as Ammirato writes with awe, they proceeded with their admonitions, notwithstanding that "the very night before one batch of them was pronounced, the tower of the Dominican friars was struck by lightning, to the great damage of the surrounding buildings." Instead of taking warning by this manifestation of the divine displeasure, they had the effrontery to maintain that it was intended to mark the anger of Heaven against the friars, for their too great pride and ostentation in the architectural embellishment of their convent. But Peter Strozzi, "a man of learning and of exemplary life," reflecting that the

* Ammirato, book xi. Gouf. 395.

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A.D. 1359. same thing had happened three times within his remembrance, perceived that what was needed was a proper protection of the tower against the lightning; which he accordingly caused to be provided, by placing on the summit of it . . . . . a selection of holy relics.*

In the meantime, there were symptoms that trouble was brewing with respect to the foreign relations of the Commonwealth. The Pisans, by vexatious interference with the Florentine merchandise, which had been wont formerly in old times to pass free through the port of Pisa, had driven the Florentine imports and exports to the little harbour of Telamone, on the coast of the Maremma. The apparently increased unhealthiness of the Maremma district, and the sanding up of the neglected port, has rendered that classical and once celebrated harbour a very desolate and miserable-looking spot at the present day, scarcely capable of affording a precarious shelter to one or two wretched fishing-boats. It is one of the many new hopes now springing up in Italy, that a railroad and sanitary improvements, such as have been accomplished in many parts of the Maremma, and a judicious cleansing and deepening of the harbour, may make Telamone once again a seat of activity and trade, such as it evidently must have been in the fourteenth century.

But its prosperity was based on the falling off of that of Pisa. All that the former gained was lost to the latter; and the Pisans felt very sore on the subject. They were continually hovering off the coast with their galleys, and endeavouring to compel merchantmen to carry their cargoes to Porto Pisano—(the port at the mouth of the Arno, a few miles below Pisa)—instead of Telamone. To remedy this, the Florentines hired ten galleys in Provence, and four more in Naples, which, on their way up the coast from the

* Ammirato, book xi. Conf. 395.

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south, happening to meet a Pisan merchant vessel, which was proceeding with her cargo to Corneto,—another little port on the Maremma coast, to the southward of Telamone, now all but abandoned,—compelled her to carry it to Telamone. A.D. 1362.

Various other grounds of mutual complaint had been occurring also from time to time to embitter the feelings of the two rival cities towards each other. When Florence had made up her mind to chastise Count Lando and his robber army, as has been seen, and the Florentine army were watching the enemy during his march along the frontier line, which divided the Pisan from the Florentine territory, the Pisans, though not openly taking part with the bandits, showed themselves evidently hostile to the Florentines, and watched every step of the Florentine army, ready to make the smallest infringement of their territory a ground of quarrel. In 1356 the Florentines, perceiving that it was becoming absolutely necessary to have the means of protecting their own commerce, created a new magistracy, called the "*Dieci del Mare*,"—a sort of Admiralty Board of Ten Commissioners,—and became for the first time in the national life a maritime power. This also was very evidently a manifestation of hostility to Pisa; and in 1362 the long smouldering enmity broke out into a blaze.

Already, previous to the formal declaration of war, Florence had sent an expedition against Montecarlo, belonging to Pisa; and the Pisans had attacked certain outlying districts of Florentine territory; but the Signory still hesitated before committing the Commonwealth to a war which would evidently tax its strength to the utmost. Things were in this position when Zato Passavanti, an aged citizen, who had already served as Gonfaloniere three times, was drawn a fourth time for that office. He was a man, says Ammirato, quite of the old school; and his

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A.D. 1362. great age had in no degree diminished his vigour of mind. He had several times urged on the Signory the necessity of war with Pisa,—and when he became Gonfaloniere for the fourth time, his first act was to call a Parliament, or public meeting of the citizens, and address them upon the same subject. His speech was an enlargement upon the often urged argument, that war was the only road towards a stable peace; and it was so effectual, that when he ceased speaking, war was decided on by popular acclamation. Bonifaccio Lupo, a Parmesan noble, was named General of of the Florentine forces; and on the 20th of June, 1362, precisely at daybreak, "according to the advice of the astrologers," the army marched out of Florence. At the same time, the Admiralty Board of Ten made an engagement with Perino Grimaldi, a naval captain of mercenaries, for four galleys, to be ready for service by the month of August.

On the 6th of July the Parmesan General, Bonifaccio Lupo, was superseded in consequence of the coming into office of a new Signory, although the campaign had opened very favourably under his auspices; a notable instance of the immense disadvantage under which Florence carried on her military operations, in consequence of the dependence of her Generals in the field on a civil government at home, which was changed every two months. The new General was Ridolfo Varano, of the princely family who were lords of Camerino.

Notwithstanding, however, the disadvantages arising from a change, which was very distasteful to the army, the Florentine arms were successful during the whole of that campaign. Nothing very decisive was achieved; but the army was victorious both in the Maremma and in the Valdera,—a district so named from a small stream which falls into the Arno, about eighteen miles above Pisa. The troops pushed their raids indeed up to the very walls of

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that city; and the little sea force was at the same time yet more successful. They took possession of the small island of Giglio; and made the far more important conquest of Porto Pisano. This was the great achievement of the first season of the war; and was marked by the acquisition of one of those trophies which were prized by the vaunting rivalry of the mediæval Italian communities even above the more really important objects of war. The huge iron chain, by which the entrance to the Pisan port was closed, was broken by the Florentine galleys, and carried off in great triumph to Florence; where it was hung up, to the intense delight of the citizens, over the western door of the baptistery; and where it remained till it was with equal rejoicing and ceremonial restored to Pisa in 1848, as a symbol of fraternization, and a token that the old municipal jealousies which had done so much mischief to Italy were at length ended, and the old hatreds forgotten. Now the celebrated chain hangs on the western wall of the Campo Santo at Pisa, with an inscription to the above effect, recording its restoration. A.D. 1363.

The campaign opened the following spring with another change of the Florentine General. Ridolfo Varano, though the Florentine arms seem to have been fairly successful under his auspices, was "dismissed with little honour;" and the Commonwealth wrote to Piero de' Farnesi, offering him the command of their armies. The Pisans meanwhile were preparing for the coming struggle, by negotiations for the hire of a body of English mercenaries, consisting of 3000 men-at-arms and 2000 infantry, which was known as "the White Company," and which was then led by one Albert the German, in the service of the Marquis of Montferrat. When the Florentines heard that such nogotiations were on foot, they immediately sent Messer Giovanni Baglietti, a merchant well acquainted with England from having trafficked there for many years, to

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A.D. 1363. see whether he could not induce the White Company to deal with Florence rather than with Pisa. Farnese, the new General, was especially anxious that this attempt should succeed, maintaining that "from the days of Cæsar up to his own time there had never been better soldiers." * Baglietti was so successful that the English, "attracted by the scent of the Florentine money, agreed to serve Florence for 10,000 florins less than the sum offered by Pisa." †

It is not very intelligible why, if the English were attracted solely by "the scent of the money," Florentine money should have smelt better than Pisan; unless indeed the historian means to insinuate that the Florentine pay was surer.

Notwithstanding, however, the success of the Florentine negotiator, and the desire and advice of the Florentine General, the treaty was abandoned and the English troops left to the service of Pisa by the influence and the authority of the Gonfaloniere Ridolfi, who "abominated the very name of the Companies;" and who maintained that the regular forces in the pay of the Commonwealth were abundantly sufficient to chastise Pisa. It is impossible not to sympathize with the feelings of Ridolfi, and not to regret the impossibility of sharing his opinion. The result, however, soon showed that the experienced General knew what he was talking about better than the patriotic civil magistrate.

Under the above circumstances Farnese was anxious to do what he could before the arrival of the English in the camp of the enemy. The campaign opened, however, with one or two unimportant successes on the part of the Pisans. But the Florentine General determined to regain his credit, and to place the Pisan commander, Rinieri da Baschi, in such a situation that he could not with honour refuse an engagement, made a dashing advance on the 7th

* Ammirato, book xii. Conf. 425. † *Ibid.*

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of May, with eight hundred horse and an equal number of foot, to Bagno a Vena, a spot in the immediate neighbourhood of Pisa. The Pisan general did not refuse the challenge; but marched out to meet the enemy with six hundred cavaliers and a much larger number of infantry. He was continually reinforced moreover by fresh troops from the city. A.D. 1363.

There were very few foreign mercenaries in either of these little armies;—and the historians give that fact as a reason why the combat was an especially fierce and hardly contested one. The combatants were mostly Florentines on the one side and Pisans on the other, and fought therefore not merely for military honour, and the credit of fairly earning their wages, which were at the best the only motives with the mercenary troops, but with all the ferocity of intense national enmity and personal hatred. The battle accordingly was long and very hard-fought. The Florentine commander had his horse killed under him; and the tradition goes, that being separated from his troops, and chancing to fall in with a loaded sumpter mule, he made the muleteer unload his beast, and put the General's war saddle on him, and thus mounted, returned to the fight and won the day. The truth of the story, or at least the contemporary belief in its truth, is vouched for by the monument raised to Piero de' Farnesi in the Cathedral of Florence, which consisted of a statue of the General in full armour seated on a mule, which was, till within a very few years, still to be seen over one of the lateral doors in the west front of the Church.

The triumph of the Florentines was greatly increased by the capture of the Pisan General, who was conducted by the victor, together with his other prisoners, to Florence, and presented with much ceremony to the Gonfaloniere and the Signory, on the 11th of May.* The Commonwealth

* Matteo Villani, book xi. chap. li.

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A.D. 1363. decreed Farnese a laurel crown, which he modestly refused to accept till he should have done something more to merit it. He accepted, however, from the Signory four war-horses magnificently caparisoned with housings embroidered with his arms; and a royal standard, which to the great comfort of all concerned, had no sooner been taken into the General's hand, than it was gently wafted by a light breeze in the direction of Pisa.

This was a strong augury in favour of resuming the active operations of the war at once;—a point on which much doubt had prevailed in the minds of the Signory, in consequence of another circumstance, which seemed to counsel a suspension of the campaign. This was the reappearance of pestilence, which again in this year visited every district of Italy, and most parts of Europe. But the Pisans, since their general Rinieri da Baschi was a prisoner in the hands of the Florentines, had given the command of their forces to Ghisello degli Ubaldini, which family had again recently returned, in consequence of some new offences, to their normal state of Ghibellinism and enmity to Florence. "So that the war proceeded not so much for the sake of glory, as for the satisfaction of a mortal hatred between the Generals, between the soldiers, and between the two nations;—a hatred of such intensity, that not even the pestilence itself, which was every day increasing in violence, could suspend or mitigate it." *

The decision in favour of pushing on the war had hardly been acted on, before it was known at Florence that the Pisans had made themselves masters of the stronghold of Altopascio in the Valdinievole. Farnese, however, did not allow himself to be diverted by this mishap from attacking the enemy in a vital part. A second fiercely contested battle was fought beneath the walls of Pisa, in which the

* Ammirato, book xii. Conf. 426.

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entire force of the Florentine troops was engaged on one side, and well-nigh all the population of Pisa, plebeian as well as patrician, came out to support the Podestà, who commanded the Pisan forces on the other. It was a longer and yet more obstinately disputed battle than the former; for the Pisans felt that "they were no longer fighting for port Telamone, but for the walls of Pisa." This time however also the Florentines were victorious; not to the extent of entering the city, which was neither expected nor attempted, but to that of compelling the enemy to seek the shelter of its walls, in much disorder and confusion, and with considerable loss. The rout was sufficiently complete to enable the General to celebrate it, and taunt the foe in the old fashion by striking a commemorative Florentine coinage before the walls of Pisa.* A.D. 1363.

Farnese was destined to enjoy the honours he had won, and the Florentines to profit by his military talents, but a very short time. On the 19th of June he was seized by the pestilence which was ravaging Italy, and having been transported to Sanminiato, there died on the following day. Matteo Villani recorded his death by plague, and his sepulture in the Sanminiato cathedral, as above mentioned; and then had time to add only one more chapter concerning "a marvellous passage of locusts," before he also was overtaken by the same mortal malady. His son Filippo carried on the record for us for yet one more year.

A few days only after the death of Piero de' Farnesi, the English mercenaries arrived in the Pisan camp; and the two circumstances made a rapid and notable change in the fortunes of the war. The Florentines, out of gratitude to the memory of Piero, gave the command of their troops to his brother Rinuccio Farnesi, a brave and worthy man, but who

* Matteo Villani, book xi. chap. liv.; Ammirato, book xii. Conf. 426.

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A.D. 1363. had none of his brother's military talents. Finding the necessity of employing some more experienced soldier, they applied to and engaged once again Pandulfo Malatesta, who had served the State so well against Count Lando and the Great Company. But he was unable to cope equally advantageously with the Englishmen. Thus reinforced, the Pisans not only rolled back the war to the gates of Florence, but repaid with interest the insults which the Florentines had inflicted on them a few months before. In the July of that same year, 1363, the Pisans not only coined money in gold and silver under the walls of Florence, but caused the wonted vaunting races to be run, intensifying the insult by starting three asses for the prize, each with a lable round his neck bearing the name of one of the principal citizens of Florence. Not content with this, they burned and ravaged the whole country around Florence, with the exception of three or four villas belonging to leading citizens, which they spared, "not from any mercy or generosity, but in order to render their owners suspected of a treasonable understanding with the enemy." *

In the autumn, the Florentines, finding it absolutely necessary to employ additional means against an enemy palpably too powerful for them, sought to strengthen themselves by engaging a body of German mercenaries belonging to a Company called "the Star," under Henri de Montfort. But the fortune of the war was still against them. The English attacked and took the Florentine camp, and drove the army with Malatesta at its head in complete rout to Florence; and following them thither, ravaged the territory around the city for the second time in the same year.

Then came discontent and suspicion, and recrimination

* Ammirato, book xii. Conf. 427.

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between the Florentines and their General. They accused him of inertness, and suspected him of treachery. He retorted that it was impossible for any general to succeed in the field, unless a very much larger discretion and greater power in many respects were allowed to him, than the Florentines were in the habit of entrusting to their generals. He wanted, for instance, among other things, the power of recalling all exiles, annulling their sentences, and availing himself of their arms. These demands increased the suspicions which the citizens had begun to conceive of the good faith of their General. For the charge made against him was not that he was deficient, either in military skill, or in courage and activity; but that the ill-success which had attended his arms was the result of his own deliberate purpose, his object being nothing less than to reduce the Commonwealth to such a condition of distress and extremity, as should induce and almost compel it to throw itself entirely into his hands, in such sort as should enable him to make himself despotic lord of Florence. A.D. 1364.

It is of small interest to modern readers to form any opinion as to the justice of these suspicions. But that they should have been entertained is a curious indication of the dangers against which the free cities of Italy needed to be ever on the watch; and of the modes in which those dangers might overtake them.

In January, 1364, the Pisans engaged another company of English mercenaries under the command of Sir John Hawkwood, that celebrated "Giovanni Aguto," who makes so large a figure in the pages of the Italian chroniclers during the remaining years of the fourteenth century. This redoubted captain "had for a surname in his own language," says Ammirato,* "the appellation '*Falcone di Bosco*,'—the Hawk of the Wood,—because his

* Book xii. Conf. 431.

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A.D. 1364. mother, being taken with the pains of labour on the lands of an estate belonging to her, had herself carried to a neighbouring wood, and there gave birth to her son." He was of noble, but not of distinguished birth, the historian goes on to say; was educated to arms by his uncle, a great master of the art of war; and before coming into Italy had been engaged in the wars between England and France. He had the reputation of distinguished bravery, was a shrewd master of stratagem, and one who "looking to the upshot of affairs, paid small attention to men's talk." With Hawkwood and his troops came first into Italy the use of the term "lances," as applied to hired troops; each "lance" being understood to consist of three men; of whom one carried a lance, and the others were bowmen. All were equally armed with sword and dagger. "The bows were of yew and long; the lances strong, and made to be used in rest. The soldiers wore iron armour on the stomach, arms, thighs, and legs; and on the breast a plate of steel; all which arms they kept so clean, that they shone like mirrors. They mostly fought on foot, having between each two archers a lance, which was held as men hold their hunting-spears in a boar-hunt. Every soldier had with him one or two boys, who besides having to keep the arms burnished, in which they were very diligent, held the horses in time of battle * * *. They were exceedingly enduring of both heat and cold, obedient to their leaders, quick at slaughtering and at plundering. They carried with them scaling-ladders made in a very ingenious manner, so that the largest separate piece did not consist of more than three steps; while the entire ladder reached to the top of the highest towers." * Such were the soldiers, continues the historian, against whom the Florentines had to fight, with a General whom they

* See also Filippo Villani, book xi. chap. lxxx.

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suspected, and without the hired troops they had engaged, but who had not yet arrived from Germany. A.D. 1364.

When, however, they had got rid of their suspected general, which they did in the following April, and when the German mercenaries had arrived in March, matters did not mend in Florence. The English, "who thought little of the Florentines, and less of the severe weather," ravaged all the Valdinievole and the lower Valdarno. On the 15th of April they advanced to the walls of Florence, causing extreme alarm in the city. They took possession of the heights of Fiesole and Montughi in the immediate neighbourhood of the city,* and assaulted the San Gallo gate. They were repulsed, however, by the Florentines under Henri de Montfort, who seems to have succeeded to the chief authority in the Florentine army; and again on the following day met with no better success in an attack on the Porta San Frediano. From this time, fortune seemed once more to have changed sides, and returned to the Florentine camp. In May, De Montfort took and burned Leghorn, and made himself master of Porto Pisano; and, what was an even yet more important matter, the Florentines succeeded in bribing the English and German mercenaries to quit the service of Pisa. It is satisfactory, however, to find that the English thus corrupted, were not Hawkwood and his band, but those other English under a German leader, whom the Pisans had previously to their agreement with Hawkwood taken into their service.

Notwithstanding, however, the successes achieved by De Montfort, the Florentines were anxious to have an Italian General-in-chief; and they were determined to spare nothing to repair the losses of their army, and fit out a new force. It was commonly said in the city, that "now was the time not merely to spend freely, but to

* Ammirato, book xii. Conf. 433.



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A.D. 1364. scatter their money, nay, to sacrifice all they had to the last penny," if they only could, "by means of a new general and a new army, invade the Pisan territory, and there cause such mischief and ruin, that a lasting remembrance of it should remain to the descendants of that proud people."

In this spirit Galeotto Malatesta, who was anxious for the appointment, that he might efface the disgrace put upon the family by the dismissal of his nephew Pandulfo, was entrusted with the general's bâton, which was solemnly presented to him by the Gonfaloniere on the 17th of July, three hours before sunset,—that being marked by the heavenly bodies as the propitious hour for the purpose.

The first step of the new general was to demand authority to give double pay to all the army, and to pay a portion of a month, as an entire month, if he should judge that the troops deserved such a bounty. One cannot help feeling some little suspicion, that this rather startling demand was the result of the new general's knowledge of the temper prevailing in the city as above described. The Signory, indeed, demurred much to the proposal, but while the city was in its present temper they dared not refuse it.

Having carried his point, Galeotto marched, on the 29th of July, at the head of four thousand cavalry and eleven thousand infantry, and encamped at Cascina, a village on the Arno, about six miles from Pisa. Comprised in the above number were three hundred young Florentines of the best families in the city, who followed the army as volunteers, in the hope of personally assisting to avenge on the Pisans the injuries they had inflicted on the Florentine territory. The Pisan army was under the command of Hawkwood, who began the battle by an assault on the Florentine camp. The engagement, however, soon became general, and after a desperately fought contest, ended in a complete and signal defeat of the Pisans. The Florentine

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general was urged to pursue the fugitives to Pisa, and endeavour to make himself master of the city by a *coup de main*. But Malatesta, pointing out that Hawkwood's English brigade was still in good order, declined to risk converting a victory into a defeat, and determined to march back the army to Florence. A.D. 1364.

The loss of the Pisans amounted to one thousand slain, and more than two thousand prisoners. Of these the foreigners were deprived of their arms and then set free. The Pisans only were retained and taken to Florence.

The triumphal entry of the general and the victorious army with their prisoners into the city, was accompanied by all the pomp and circumstance which it was possible to devise. And, as usual, the most highly-prized enjoyment of the victor's triumph consisted in heaping insults on the vanquished foe. At the city gate they were made to pay eighteen *soldi* a head, as if they had been cattle for the market. When brought into the Piazza, they were compelled one by one to kiss the stone lion, which, under the popular name of Marzocco, was to Florence what the winged lion was to Venice, after a fashion intended to express the height of contumely. Afterwards they were compelled to labour at the construction of that building in the Piazza, opposite to the Palazzo Pubblico, which from that day to this has been known as the "Tetto dei Pisani," and which is familiar to all who have known Florence, as the present Post-office.*

The result of this great victory was a treaty of peace between the two rival cities, the most important stipulations of which were that Pisa should restore to the Florentine merchants all the franchises and privileges which they had ever enjoyed in the port of Pisa; and should moreover pay to the Commonwealth an hundred thousand golden florins in ten years.

* Ammirato, book xii. Conf. 434.



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A.D. 1368. Florence was victorious. But it was questionable, and was questioned much by the commonalty, which of the two communities had suffered most by the war. Florence had burthened herself with a load of debt, and had submitted to an amount of taxation before unknown. Her territory had been again and again ravaged; and in common with the rest of Italy she had laid up fresh store of evil for the future by calling fresh bodies of mercenary troops into Italy. It was said in Florence that the two great commercial cities were in the position of two gamblers, who having played all night find that the money of both has gone to enrich the keepers of the table,—represented in the case in question by the German and English mercenaries.*

The lesson was sufficient to induce the Florentines to refuse the request of Pope Urban V., who had in 1367 brought back the Papal court from Avignon to Rome, after its seventy-three years of "Babylonish captivity," that they would join a league which he had made with the Emperor against Bernabo Visconti. The Florentines rejected the Pope's proposal. But their prudence failed to ensure them even a brief interval of tranquillity. In the following year, 1368, returned that ill-omened portent,—of far more disastrous significance than the thunder-bolts and monstrous births which distressed the old chroniclers so much,—the Emperor. That eternal curse of Italy, like the clinging, throttling old man of the sea in the Eastern fable, that ever-returning incubus, the German Emperor, was once again in Italy. And Florence prepared, as usual, for stormy weather. He came in monstrous and unnatural league too, this time, with that other equally baneful old man of the sea, his natural rival, the Pope.

We know the end that is coming; how the two together

* Ammirato, book xii. Conf. 435.

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at last throttled the life out of Florence, and out of so much else besides. Neither party was yet strong enough, nor was their alliance yet close enough to accomplish this. But the friendship was an evil, and an ominous one. It is curious to remark that one of the evils arising from the "Babylonian captivity," or sojourn of the Papal Court at Avignon, was the increased tendency of the Popes to foregather with the Emperors. Italian historians have abounded in lamentations over the evils caused by what they love to designate as the "Babylonian captivity of the Church;" but I do not remember that the tendency above noted has received the attention it merits. At first sight, it may be supposed that the residence of the Popes at Avignon, and the consequent circumstance that all the Popes of the time of "the captivity" were Frenchmen, which naturally caused a close connection between them and the French monarchs, would have scarcely tended to any friendship between the Popes and the Emperors. But, besides that the antagonism between the French and Imperial courts was not yet such as it afterwards became, the absence of the Papacy from Italy destroyed even that small amount of Italian feeling and Italian interest, which had existed in the Popes of an earlier time. The Guelphism of the Papacy, which, as has been sufficiently shown in an earlier part of this volume, had been very useful to Italy, was extinct. The popular sympathies, which certainly did exist to a certain degree in many of the Popes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, were extinct also. Those French nobles, turned into more or less simoniacally elected Popes, had more fellow feeling with monarchs than with subjects, or with independent communities. They were more accessible to courtly influences. Their connections and natural sympathies were more in that direction. They were more feudal and less priestly. They fell further than ever away from all the good influences which the theory of

A.D. 1368.

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A.D. 1368. the Papacy had compelled it to exercise on the political development of Italy; and made a great stride in advance on that evil path, which has made its own position a permanent and glaring lie, and has rendered it the greatest obstacle to human well-being and improvement, with which mankind has ever yet had to contend.

Florence, however, was still strong; and both Pope and Emperor were weak. And the evil-boding foregathering of the two went no further than to make the Holy Father the friendly patron of the Imperial claims in Italy, and intercessor with the Republic for the favourable consideration of them. Of course the "Imperial claims" resolved themselves into the usual likeness, to those of the horse-leech. There was the usual talk about feudal rights, and encroachments, and rescripts, and Imperial decrees. There were the usual threatenings; and Florence was obliged to show her teeth and growl,—a process which, even though it never came to biting, was a costly one. Then, after an infinity of journeying to and fro of ambassadors, and much talk, "the Pope and the Emperor, perceiving that the Florentines were not going to give up any of their dependencies without fighting for them, and the Florentines seeing that the Emperor was inclined to come to terms for a cash payment," * it was settled that the imperial leech should let go his hold for this time in consideration of 50,000 golden florins, to be paid, 10,000 within twelve days after the signing of the contract, 15,000 in the following April, and the remainder in the subsequent August.

The prudent refusal of the Commonwealth to join the Papal and Imperial league against Bernabo Visconti, did not avail to keep Florence long out of war. And although the dissensions and party feuds of her own citizens, and an undue lust of dominion may be chargeable, especially

* Ammirato, book xiii. Conf. 461.

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in the earlier portion of her history, with much of the war in which Florence was almost continually engaged, yet it must be admitted that no amount of wisdom, prudence, and moderation would have availed to enable her to live at peace with her neighbours under the social and political circumstances of Italy in the fourteenth century. A new war, in which the Commonwealth found itself engaged in 1369, furnishes a signal proof of the truth of this remark. A.D. 1369.

The community of Sanminiato, at the instigation of Cardinal Guido de Montfort, who had been left by the Emperor as his Vicar in Lucca, suddenly rebelled against the authority of the Commonwealth, and announced its intention of seceding from the Florentine dominions. The Signory, as a matter of course, sent their troops to quell the insurrection. Whereupon Bernabo Visconti, with not less ingratitude than shortsighted folly, declared that he was Imperial Vicar in Tuscany, and that as such it was incumbent on him to defend the people of Sanminiato, which was, or ought to be, an Imperial fief. The Signory at once replied, that if he chose to break the peace existing between them in such a quarrel, they should be ready for him. And so there was fresh hiring of troops, and necessity for more money.*

When the ultra-popular constitution of the Florentine government, as it was at this period, is remembered; when it is recollected that the men who were thus prompt to throw back defiance in the face of princeling, pope, or emperor who ventured to menace the rights, power, or dominions of the Commonwealth of Florence, were, the majority of them, hard-handed workmen who knew right well that war meant increased taxes, and that they must certainly and immediately put their hands into their own pockets to pay for the national vindication they voted

* Ammirato, book xiii. Gonf. 464.

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A.D. 1371. for;—when these circumstances, I say, are duly borne in mind, it is impossible not to feel a strong admiration for the brave and indomitable spirit of resistance to foreign oppression, and zeal for the honour and independence of their country thus manifested. If only those stout artisans had loved their own liberty and independence as well as they did that of Florence;—if only they could have understood that the greatness and prosperity of their beloved "*Comune*" could be secured only by making it the country of all its citizens instead of that of a party among them only, what a people they might have been!

The Commonwealth girded up its loins for war with the Visconti. But Bernabo hired those dreadful English free-lances under Hawkwood, and sent them once again into the Valdarno. They inflicted a defeat on the Florentine army near Pontadera on the 10th of December, 1369; and then, after ravaging the country once again up to the walls of Florence, passed across the Apennines into the territory of Bologna. And in the same January the Florentines retook Sanminiato.* Nevertheless the war commenced against Bernabo Visconti on that account was not abandoned. The Florentines, anxious to punish his ingratitude, entered into the league against him with the Pope which they had previously refused, and sent an army into Lombardy under Rosso de' Ricci, which was defeated before Mirandola by Hawkwood, who took the Florentine general prisoner. The forces of the Church were so much discouraged by this defeat, that the Pope was disposed to grant Visconti terms of peace, and the Florentines acquiesced in the same arrangement, which was concluded at Bologna in the spring, 1371.

But the most notable result of this war was one which it was in no wise undertaken to attain,—the re-

* Ammirato, book xiii. Gonf. 370.

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storation of Lucca to liberty once more,—a revolution which concluded the series of that strange succession of Lucchese vicissitudes, which was related in a previous chapter. A.D. 1371.

The Emperor had left Count Guido de Montfort as his Vicar in Lucca. The Cardinal was a friend of Bernabo Visconti; but that turbulent and restless prince, who seems to have made but small difference between friends and foes when his own interest was in question, set on foot intrigues with the Interminelli family with a view of getting possession of that city. It was rarely indeed that any similar scheme was on foot in any part of Italy without a knowledge of it coming to the ears of the Signory of Florence. They received information of the plot that was being hatched against the Cardinal, and thereupon sent ambassadors to him with full information of it, and a proposal that he should "liberate himself from a troublesome position, and that unfortunate city from slavery." By so doing, they said, he would obtain "the highest credit from men and from God, and something to his own advantage at the same time; inasmuch as the Florentines were ready to pay him down 25,000 florins on behalf of the Lucchese for their liberty." * One or other of these three inducements, or all of them together, prevailed on the Cardinal, who having received the cash down, and trusting to receive the other considerations in due time, gave up the city to the inhabitants, and quitted it on the 25th March, 1371. "But inasmuch as there did not remain of the Lucchese," says Ammirato, "one alive, who had ever looked liberty in the face, the Florentines, besides lending them the money for their deliverance, sent them several of the most discreet and notable citizens of Florence, who had for a long time been at the head of affairs in their own government, to

* Ammirato, book xiii. Conf. 468.

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A.D. 1371. guide the city so long accustomed to servitude in the management of its new liberty."

Assuredly a very remarkable change must have taken place in the state of public feeling since Florence was so madly striving to conquer, purchase, obtain by any means whatever possession of Lucca, in order to hold it in subjection to herself. Now, when she might so easily have made herself mistress of the city, she interfered with her influence and her money to enable the Lucchese to recover their liberty. But the only visible change in Florence to which such a change of policy can be at all attributed would seem to be the substitution of a more thoroughly popular government for the burgher oligarchy which was in power on the former occasion.

The English troops under Hawkwood had, after defeating the Florentines at Pontedera, and then overrunning the Valdarno up to the very walls of Florence, as has been related, taken themselves off across the Apennines into the fertile country around Bologna. But the Italians had yet to learn the full extent of the evil involved in the employment of such means of fighting out their quarrels among themselves. They were not yet fully aware of the difficulty, not to say impossibility, of getting rid of these men, when they had done with them. Hawkwood and his English free-lances are by no means to be classed in the same category with the German Werner, and the Frenchman Montreal, with their bandit hordes. They were soldiers and not brigands. They had not been gathered together for the purpose of living by plunder and violence, but had been invited into Italy to take service—honourable service according to the notions of the time,—under the banner of a legitimate sovereign. When his need for them was over, they passed from his service to that of other sovereigns. Nevertheless the mischief arising from the presence of these mercenaries was infinitely greater

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than any advantage they could afford even to the employer of them. The visible mischief worked by the free-lances in the exercise of their profession, intelligible to the men of that day, was very great, and the more latent evils which were not understood by the Italians of that century were much greater. A.D. 1371.

But a new phase of trouble from the same prolific source arose, when it came to pass that these hirelings were out of work. A large body of men out of work is always a troublesome thing to deal with. But when these men are organized into an army, and have arms in their hands, the difficulty becomes a much more perilous one. It is yet further increased if such army recognize no allegiance to any authority in the land, which must necessarily feed them. An army out of work is an ugly thing under any circumstances. Under those of Italy in the fourteenth century it was a menacing difficulty indeed.

Such was the case with Hawkwood and his merry men, now in the fertile plains of the Bolognese. The Cardinal Guglielmo di Sant' Angelo, legate there for the Holy Father, found himself very much at a loss what to do with these troublesome guests. To pass them on to the next State, seemed to his Eminence, as it had to other authorities in similar difficulties, the easiest way of getting rid of them. But this plan has the inconvenience of generating very obstinate quarrels between neighbouring jurisdictions. And hence arose a new source of troubles, caused by these bands, of whom Italy might say, in the words of the love poet, that she could neither live with them nor without them.

The Cardinal wrote to the Signory to say that he had no means of maintaining the free-lances, and no money to give them, and that *he much feared that, unless Florence would come forward with a handsome sum*, they would throw

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A.D. 1375. themselves on the Tuscan territory. The Florentines, indignant at this barefaced attempt at fleecing them, replied by an absolute refusal to give the Cardinal a penny. And sure enough, the next news they heard from Bologna was, that Hawkwood and his army were crossing the Apennines, and advancing towards Prato. So, "the Commonwealth seeing a powerful army, led by a General of great reputation, coming down upon them, and the time of the harvest at hand, and but little concord at home within their own walls, had recourse to the old means of getting out of their difficulties—cash."* They sent commissioners to treat with Hawkwood, and agreed with him that he should abstain from molesting the Florentine territory in any way for five years in consideration of a sum of 130,000 florins, to be paid before the end of the ensuing September.

"And," says Ammirato, "the Florentines were well content with their bargain, for they were pleased, that at least no part of their money should go to satiate the avarice of priests; and further, that Hawkwood not only abstained from touching the Florentine territory, but revealed to them, that the Legate had secretly instigated him to seize the town of Prato." It was also discovered much about the same time, that this was intended only as a starting-point for much greater designs, that the Legate had conceived a plan for subjecting Florence itself to the Church; and that a celebrated architect, Matteo Gattapane, of Gubbio, had absolutely been in Florence, commissioned by the Cardinal to choose a spot in the city for a fortress, and furnish plans for it. †

When these things became known in Florence the indignation of the people boiled over. The aristocratic party, under the leading of the Albizzi family, which was now rising into importance in the Commonwealth, would

* Ammirato, book xiii. Gonf. 500. † *Ibid.* Gonf. 501.

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fain have sided with the Church and the Cardinal; but the current of the popular feeling was running too strongly, and they did not dare to say a word in that sense. The Signory, at once putting aside all recollections of their recent enmity, entered into an alliance with Bernabo Visconti, declared war against the Church, and put a tax on all the ecclesiastics in their dominions to pay for it. They hung one Pietro da Canneto, a priest, and a monk, his colleague, who were proved to have been engaged treasonably in the scheme for bringing the free-lances to Prato. They forbade any citizen to accept the bishoprick of either Florence or Fiesole. And they enacted a fine of a thousand florins against any one who should assert that any of these acts was contrary to the "Liberty of the Church." They caused a vast number of towns in the dominions of the Church to raise the standard of rebellion, —Perugia, Viterbo, Montefiascone, Gubbio, Forli, Spoleto, and others. Everywhere Florentine gold and Florentine intrigue were busy in raising up new enemies against the Holy See. The Papal court, in a paroxysm of indignation, summoned the Signory of Florence to appear personally, or by their representative, before the Holy Father, to answer for their conduct. The Florentines sent representatives to answer the summons, of whom the principal was Donato Barbadori, an eminent doctor in canon law, whose name has been rendered memorable by the boldness of his reply to the Papal court. A.D. 1376.

Having first gone over the offences against the Commonwealth of Florence of which his government had to complain, he went on to insist that "priestly pride, avarice, dishonesty, and atrocious cruelty,"* and not the power of the Florentines, had caused the miserable subjects of the Holy See to revolt. For assuredly the solicitations

* Ammirato, book xiii. Conf. 505.

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A.D. 1376. of Florence would not have induced town after town, and district after district, to rise against a beneficent ruler. The Roman government, Barbadori declared in the face of its representatives, having imported French insolence and tyranny into Italy, instead of seeking to gain the affections of its subjects, "had placed all its trust in fortresses, dungeons, citadels, and such-like places, more fitted to lay tyrants and despots than to the mildness and beneficence that ought to be the characteristics of ecclesiastical rule." He then went on to show, from the whole history of Florence, that the Commonwealth had ever been well and Christianly disposed in all its dealings, especially insisting on the notorious fact, that in the times of universal distress and scarcity the poor, driven away from every city in Italy, had found a refuge only in Florence, from the gates of which no man in distress had been sent away.

It may be readily imagined that all this, and much more to like purpose, had not the smallest effect towards inducing the Papal officials to suspend he fulmination of anathemas and interdicts against the Commonwealth and its rulers, who were all severally excommunicated by name, "condemning their souls to the pains of hell, confiscating all their goods, and declaring that any man might capture, sell, or kill their bodies, or maltreat them in any other way, in every respect as if they were infidels, without any remorse or misgiving of conscience whatever."*

On hearing this sentence pronounced, Barbadori, who was a man of strong emotion, turning to a crucifix which was on the wall, threw himself on his knees before it, and cried aloud: "To thee, Jesus, my Lord and Saviour, I appeal from the sentence of thy Vicar! I appeal to that dread day when Thou shalt come to judge the world with-

* Ammirato, book xiii. Conf. 505.

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out respect of persons. Be Thou till that day our just and incorruptible Judge, and the defender of our Commonwealth against the cruel blasphemies fulminated against it, Thou knowest with what justice!" A.D. 1378.

The conduct of Barbadori was highly appreciated in Florence. A present of plate to the amount of fifty florins, and special permission to carry offensive and defensive arms, were voted to Barbadori on his return, as rewards for his courageous bearing. The latter privilege seems to indicate that it was thought his life might be in danger from priestly vengeance even in the streets of Florence.

The Signory engaged Hawkwood with five hundred bowmen, and five hundred lances, besides his own Company of Englishmen, for 250,000 florins a year, for the active prosecution of the war. They ordered the sale of ecclesiastical property to the amount of 100,000 florins; and after the churches had been for some time closed, determining to break with the Papal court in spiritual as well as temporal matters, they compelled the priests to reopen them, to ring their bells, perform all the offices, and administer the Sacraments as usual, enacting heavy fines against any bishop or priest who should absent himself from his See or benefice.*

The state of war with the Holy See continued till the death of Pope Gregory XI., in 1378. But the contest is less memorable for any results or deeds of arms, than as an indication of the temper of the old Florentines in matters ecclesiastic, their preference for good citizenship over good churchmanship, and their thorough-going determination not to allow any spiritual threats to frighten them into submitting their temporal affairs to priestly tyranny.

But all these troubles, struggles against the encroach-

* Ammirato, book xiii. Conf. 514.

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A.D. 1377. ments of ecclesiastical oppression, difficulties with free-lance companies, necessities for keeping in check the overweening power of despot princes in the north of Italy, and other smaller cares, such as the repression of the Ubaldini in the Apennines, and the putting down of the Tarlati at Arezzo, —all this was as nothing towards arresting the growth of prosperity at home, sapping the foundations of it, and causing the Florentine experiment of popular government to issue in final failure, in comparison to the dissensions which were every day becoming more menacing, and the bad government which the passions aroused by these dissensions were every day rendering more intolerable within the walls of the city. The historian Ammirato, from whose account of the events of these central years of the fourteenth century the above narrative has been mainly taken, alludes to the internal discord of the city as one of the reasons which led the Signory to feel that, under the circumstances, it was better to treat with the free-lances than to resist them. But such diminution of the ability of the Commonwealth to deal with external troubles was the least part of the mischief.

The early feuds between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines were bad; but they were extinguished by the extinction of Ghibellinism. The quarrels between the Bianchi and the Neri were worse, because there was more of personality and less of principle in the motives of them. They were merged in the increasing antagonism between the nobles and the people; a still more pernicious strife, in that it called into activity the baneful passions of larger masses of the community, and acted as a social solvent with the force peculiar to a war of castes. This antagonism also in its turn was brought to an end by the defeat and suppression of the nobles. Worst of all were the dissensions which succeeded these, and which will give a new colouring to that portion of the story to be narrated in the

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following Book. The jealousies and animosities, which will there have to be related and explained, take the shape of that most fatal of all social maladies, a hostile separation into two camps of the rich and the poor; and furnish a story in which the hatred and mutual aggressions of these two parties form the unchanging background; while the competing intrigues of rival great families to turn the popular passions to their own profit and exaltation furnish the continually changing incidents. A.D. 1377.



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# BOOK IV.

FROM THE TUMULT OF THE CIOMPI, A.D. 1378,

TO

THE CONQUEST OF PISA, A.D. 1406.

18 YEARS.



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## CHAPTER I.

Contemporaneousness of periods of prosperity with periods of political and social disturbance—Florentine wealth—Social manners—Florence a community of workers—Commercial and manufacturing industry of Florence—Banking—Manufacture and dyeing of woollen cloths—The silk manufacture—Great Florentine families all engaged in trade—Prospects of the political future of Florence at the end of the fourteenth century—Retrospect of past political change—Ruling political sentiment in the people—"I Santi"—The war with Gregory XI.—Difficulties against which "the Eight" called "I Santi" had to struggle—Dissatisfaction among the masses of the people—Tyranny of the "Capitani di parte Guelfa"—"Admonition," its meaning in Florence—Change in the old party land-marks—Saint Catherine of Siena—Her celebrated letters—State of contending parties in the spring of 1378.

In examining the histories of any of the Italian cities, especially the republics during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, the reader is struck by a constantly recurring phenomenon, which appears very difficult of explanation. It is the contemporaneousness of conditions of apparently great and flourishing prosperity with the presence of every sort of scourge, which modern politicians and economists deem the most fatal to productive industry and the accumulation of wealth. In the story of the cities, which were republics, this singular phenomenon presents itself the more remarkably; and in that of Florence, "the most republican of all republics," it most strongly forces itself on the attention and curiosity of the reader.

War, pestilence, and famine seem to have been powerless to sap the energies or stay the progress of this irre-

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A.D. 1378. pressible community. On one page the historians give you the story of calamities, which appear sufficient to cause the ruin of any social body subjected to them, and on the next speak with vaunting satisfaction of the power, wealth, and consideration enjoyed by the subjects of their patriotic record.

Nor is the explanation to be found in any suspicion that the assertions in this sort of the old chroniclers are unfounded or exaggerated. There is no possibility of doubting the position held in Europe by the Republic of Florence during the period on which this history is about to enter. As little can there be any question that Florence at that time possessed at home all those things which are generally held to constitute and to mark a flourishing and progressive civilization. She was so wealthy that no amount of pillage by Emperor, Pope, or Free-lance Captain appears to have been sufficient to disable her from meeting ever new calls upon her exchequer. Art in all its highest, if not yet in its most splendid, manifestations was beginning to ennoble and embellish life. The monuments of architecture raised by the burgher community of Florence amid its civil dissensions, its enormous disbursements for the purchase of the peace in Italy which it every day more and more began to feel necessary to its own well-being, and the wars which nevertheless it waged when threatened with the loss of power or prestige, still stand where those indefatigable workers placed them, the wonder and admiration of every succeeding generation of pilgrims from the richest and most powerful countries of modern Europe, and the unmistakeable and undeniable evidence of the truth of those boastings of a prosperity which seems so incredible in the pages of the historians.

Where is the explanation of facts so much in contradiction with all modern economical science to be sought for? The facts, incompatible as they seem to be, are, it

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may be safely assumed, indisputable. How are they to be reconciled with each other? A.D. 1378.

In the first place, some amount of allowance must probably be made for a certain latitude in the expression of that contemporaneousness, which is attributed to these facts. Local distance obliterates to the eye the unmarked spaces which intervene between well-marked objects in a far horizon. And distance of time produces a similar effect infallibly and irresistibly on the mind which contemplates the events of a far-removed period. The inevitable and unceasing condensing process to which the history of mankind is subjected, as it rolls on, contributes to produce this fallacious result. The history of England during the last past month, as written in the columns of a newspaper, would fill more volumes than the conditions of the world can afford for the record of all its anti-christian story! By the end of the year the records of that well-filled busy month, with its prolific activities, its fertile crop of joys and sorrows, will have been compressed into some three or four pages of an annual register. A few years hence it will have dwindled to as many lines; and before it has receded one half century into the past, it will, unless it happen to have contained some specially salient event, have been blotted out by the gathering mists for ever. The salient events alone remain visible; and they are seen as the distant columns of a long colonnade are seen by one looking along it from the far end,—all blended together.

The intervening spaces are lost. And the salient events of human history are, alas! for the most part calamities. Happy the people, as it has been said, who have no history! The reparatory processes were to be found in these unrecorded spaces between the events, which have been lost to history and to the ken of the subsequent generations. Man is noisy over the calamities he makes,—noisy with the blare of trumpets or with the wail of suffer-

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A.D. 1378. ing. Nature does her reparatory ministering in silence. The mighty battle, with its thousands slain, is recorded, and lives in distant history. The silent drawing over their ghastly graves of nature's obliterating mantle of green is told in no chronicle. The ravage of hostile armies, which has robbed the husbandman of his reward, and afflicted a city with want and scarcity, is related and remembered. The unwearied perseverance with which mother Earth returns to her kindly toil, and silently repairs the evil, is untold.

Even with regard to the works of man and human industry a similar law gives history its form and colouring. The great act of spoliation, which has swept away the accumulated hoards heaped together by the long industry of many hands and many days, is an event, and is not forgotten. The quiet toil which amassed the heap, and which, returning ant-like to its task, will replace it, fills no page.

Allowance, therefore, must be made for these lost spaces, when we read in one chapter of an historian's narrative the record of calamities, which might seem sufficient to shake if not shatter a social system, and in the next the vaunting assurance that never had the community been so great, so prosperous, so powerful as in those halcyon days, which the historian is recording. But there is another class of considerations that will enable us yet further to account for the phenomenon of that startling contemporaneousness of prosperity and calamity, which has been the subject of the foregoing remarks; a class of considerations applicable to the history of all the mediæval Italian Communes, but especially so to that of Florence.

The prosperity of which the Florentine historians boast, and of which the unmistakeable material evidences remain to this day, was to a greater degree probably than in the case of any other community, the prosperity of the social entity

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of Florence as looked at from the outside; and was compatible with, and attained by a greater amount of individual sacrifice, than would have been held to be consistent with national prosperity elsewhere. That enormous, and really, as it seems to the reader of the old Florentine historians, inexhaustible wealth—that Fortunatus' purse, from which bribes to Popes, subsidies to dependent Communes, donatives to Emperors, salaries to Free-lance Captains, all counted by the hundreds of thousands of ounce-weight golden florins, were paid out in never-ending succession, constituted, it may be supposed, a larger proportion of the entire expenditure of the community, than a similar class of out-goings has often borne to the total revenue of other countries. And if to all these items of expense be added those incurred for public objects at home, such as magnificent public buildings and the decoration of them, the proportion of means expended on public to those retained for private purposes will be yet more striking. For in fact thrift—frugality pushed to the limits of parsimony—was at all times a special feature in the private life of republican Florence. Like ancient Rome in its better day, in this respect, sparing frugality at home, and in the tenor of the daily lives of the Florentines, accompanied and rendered possible a more than royal magnificence in the public expenditure of the Commune. Unlike Genoa the superb, and gorgeous pleasure-loving Venice in this, the domestic habits of the Florentines of all classes were always noted for their severe thriftiness. The old habit is not even yet worn out; and to the present day the Tuscan is apt to be deemed over careful of his money, by the citizens of Rome, or the Lombard cities. A.D. 1378.

The grave merchant nobles of republican Florence, who would not only have thought themselves on the high road to ruin, if they had allowed their private expenditure to reach such a proportion of their means as the rich men of less

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A.D. 1378. staid and austere communities are in the habit of doing, but would have felt that in so acting they were losing their character of responsible and respected citizens, and incurring the blame and contempt of their fellows,—these same frugal heads of frugal households were well pleased to hear and to boast of the vast sums which their Commune expended, and which did unquestionably much to raise the name of Florence, and make her influence felt throughout mediæval Europe. Nor was the self-denial involved in this system of frugality at home, coupled with a magnificent public expenditure, so severe as would be that of any Englishman or Frenchman who should be called on to retrench his private expenses for the purpose of contributing more munificently to the public income of his country. The Florentine citizen got a much larger and more immediately personal gratification out of the glory and public magnificence of his country than the most patriotic Englishman or Frenchman could obtain from a similar source. "*L'état, c'est moi!*" could be said by every Florentine citizen, almost with as much accuracy as by the French king. He was at least a part of the State, and no such infinitesimally small part as precluded his partaking very sensibly in all that redounded to its honour and glory. A very large proportion of the citizens of all classes except the absolutely lowest—and even those were hardly excluded under the most recent modification of the constitution,—belonged, or had belonged, or hoped to belong, to the governing body of the State. All took an active and busy interest in the affairs of government; and not only in such affairs as affected the home lives of the citizens, but in the conduct of Florence as a sovereign community towards other states. It is impossible that the ordinary members of any of the larger European social bodies should feel that immediate personal interest, and busy themselves with that eager activity, which a Florentine burgher felt in and

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bestowed on the affairs of his beloved "Commune;" and the Englishman of the nineteenth century, in order adequately to realize to himself the relationship that existed between a fourteenth-century Florentine and the State of which he was a member, must call to mind the interests and the passions of his vestry, or the petty politics of the club-room. In a state of society thus constituted, that prosperity, which consisted in the proud front shown by the community towards other sovereign states, and in the public manifestations of magnificence, would be held to countervail and over-ride a much larger amount of private woe and suffering than would be the case elsewhere. And these considerations may contribute something towards an explication of the problem to which the reader's attention has been called. A.D. 1378.

But there is yet another circumstance peculiar to the old Florentine social system, which may perhaps avail more than either of these which have been discussed, to account for the very rapid alternations, if not absolute contemporaneousness of conditions, of great prosperity and what would appear to be most severe calamity.

Republican Florence was essentially a community of workers. There were no idle classes. All were producers of wealth. There were no drones in that hive. And the accumulation of honey was proportionably rapid there. The waste of war, the losses from the ravaging of the territory of the Commonwealth by an enemy, or of the streets of the city by the turbulent citizens themselves, the exhaustion of the finances consequent on the enormous demands on the public purse for bribes and subsidies to Emperors, Popes, or Bandit Captains, were all repaired and replaced by the never-ceasing toil of the entire population with a celerity that could not have been rivalled by any differently constituted community.

The commercial activity of Florence was at the period

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A.D. 1378. which we have now reached very great, and its profits very large. The three principal branches of industry which enriched the Florentines were—banking, the manufacture of cloth, and the dyeing of it, and the manufacture of silk. The three most important guilds of the seven "*arti maggiori*" were those which represented these three industries.

Perhaps the most important in the amount of its gains, as well as that which first rose to a high degree of importance, was the "*Arte del Cambio*," or banking. The earliest banking operations seem to have arisen from the need of the Roman court to find some means of causing the dues to which it laid claim in distant parts of Europe to be collected and transmitted to Rome. When the Papal Court was removed to Avignon, its residence there occasioned a greatly increased sending backwards and forwards of money between Italy and that city.* And of all this banking business, the largest and most profitable portion was in the hands of Florentine citizens, whether resident in Florence or in the various commercial cities of Europe. We find Florentines engaged in lending money at interest to sovereign princes as early as the first quarter of the twelfth century.† We have already in the thirteenth century seen the Florentine houses of the Mozzi and the Spini acting as Papal bankers and farmers of the Papal revenues. And in the latest days of the Republic we shall still find the Strozzi acting in the same capacity to the spendthrift Leo X. and the needy Clement VII., and thus accumulating the wealth which is enjoyed by the descendants of those great bankers to the present day.

* Della Decima, e della Mercatura dei Fiorentini, fino al Secolo xvi., vol. ii. p. 128. This very useful but very scarce work, in four vols. 4to., "Lisbona, e Lucca, 1765," is printed without any author's name. But the name of the writer is Pagnini. See also Muratori, Antiq. Ital. vol. i. p. 177.

† Pagnini della Decima, vol. ii. p. 129; Murat. Annal. vol. vii. p. 149.

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The Alberti in the middle of the fourteenth century had houses or counters established in Avignon, Bruges, Brussels, Paris, Siena, Perugia, Rome, Naples, Barletta, and Venice.* And the Peruzzi, and their associates the Bardi, had agencies and dependent houses still more widely scattered over Europe. A.D. 1378.

Their colossal operations as bankers and loan contractors ended, as is well known, in a bankruptcy which shook the whole then existing commercial fabric of Europe to its foundations. This gigantic failure occurred in the year 1346; and was occasioned by the non-payment by Edward III. of England of the immense sum of 1,365,000 golden florins, advanced to him by the Florentine bankers. The King's inability to pay was caused by his wars with France; and there may yet be read in the account books of the Peruzzi family, still preserved by their descendants, the ominous entry, under the date of 1339, of two hundred and three lire, sixteen soldi, paid for sending an armed galley from Barletta to Rhodes, with the news that war had broken out between Edward III. and France.

The Strozzi, at a subsequent period, suffered heavy losses by the King of France, and by the Popes. And it is abundantly evident from consideration *à priori*, as well as *à posteriori*, that loan-contracting in the middle ages was a very hazardous business. But that fact alone, had we no other evidence on the subject, would be sufficient to prove that it must have been occasionally an extremely lucrative one. The two conditions are mutually dependent, and involve each other. And the wealth that flowed into Florence from this specialty of its industry was indubitably enormous.

The next most important branch of Florentine commerce was the manufacture, and perhaps still more specially the

* Pagnini della Decima, vol. ii. p. 127.

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A.D. 1378. dyeing and dressing of woollen cloths. This also preceded the silk manufacture in point of time in Florence. But it fell into decadence, while the latter was still in its most flourishing state. In the first half of the fourteenth century there were more than two hundred cloth manufacturing and dyeing establishments in Florence. From seventy to eighty thousand pieces of cloth were produced in the year, valued at above one million and two hundred thousand golden florins. And it was calculated that one good third of this sum remained in Florence, as the price of manufacture, besides the profits on the buying and selling of the raw material. More than thirty thousand persons were engaged in, and supported by, this manufacture and trade.* The greater part of the wool used, especially that for the finer sorts of cloth, was of foreign production. The best of all was that brought from Spain and Portugal, specially the latter; the next best was the English, which seems to have been used in very much larger quantities. It is amusing to find the wools of Codigualdo and Scrisestri specially recorded, under which appellations the reader may perhaps fail to recognize the familiar sounds of Cotswold and Chichester.

There seem sufficient grounds for believing that the art of cultivating, spinning, and weaving silk was first introduced into Florence from Lucca, in the year 1315. The statutes of the guild of silk-workers were drawn up in 1335; † and it may safely be concluded that the art and trade was not known long before the organizing and monopolizing genius of mediæval commerce formed the practitioners of the new art into a guild and subjected them to a special code of laws. The silk manufacture and trade in Florence remained, however, for a long time very inferior in importance to that of the woollen manufacturers.

* Villani Stor., lib. xi. cap. xciii.; Pagnini della Decima, vol. ii. p. 104.
† Pagnini della Decima, vol. ii. p. 106.

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And it probably was not earlier than the beginning of the fifteenth century that it began to assume the dimensions of an important branch of the Florentine foreign trade.* A.D. 1378.

It will have been observed in reading the preceding pages, that many families, whose names have become known throughout Europe as those of the most prominent and influential in Italy, were engaged in Florentine trade at the period which this narrative has reached. *All* Florentines were so engaged. All were busily occupied in making money by processes far more rapid than any of which those engaged in similar occupations can avail themselves in our days. And this universal activity and unanimity in the object of it will go far to account for the extraordinary speed with which Florence appears to have recovered from blows that seem calculated to have paralyzed and ruined its prosperity.

A long series of such blows has been related in the preceding chapters of this narrative,—most of them resolving themselves more or less immediately into the disbursement and loss of cash;—so long a series that it seems strange to say that Florence nevertheless wielded at this time a greater money power than any other state in Christendom. We have seen reason too,—while recording the battles which the Republican Commonwealth had to fight, the jealousies it had to encounter, the pillage to which it had to submit, and its constant increase in wealth and power, notwithstanding all these misfortunes,—to mark from time to time the increasing indications of the existence in its social state of far more dangerous and insidious evils, which, in the opinion of the present writer, carried within them the germ of that fatal malady which brought this so flourishing social system to an early and premature death. All, however, had as yet turned out favourably; and the

* Pagnini della Decima, vol. ii. p. 224.

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A.D. 1378. Florentine patriots of the latter end of the fourteenth century may have flattered themselves that all these troubles within and without the walls were but as the maladies to which youth is liable,—that the constitution, which had not only outlived them, but had on the whole prospered in despite of them, was at bottom sound, and the social civilization resulting from it calculated to live for a long future of progress and prosperous greatness. They had the greater reason to indulge in such agreeable views of the future, and to disregard all such croaking vaticinations of coming evil as the above, even if any one had then been guilty of playing such a Cassandra's part, in that a period of the greatest splendour and prosperity in the whole existence of the Republic, was now ushered in by a convulsion which threatened to bring down the entire social fabric in sudden and universal ruin. It did not do so. Florence not only survived the crisis, but appears to have conquered the evil without any very great difficulty. But there are in the body social as in the body physical maladies, the greatest danger from which arises from the remedies that are adopted to get rid of them for the nonce.

Florence rode out the storm of the Ciompi tumults, as the memorable insurrection was called which in 1378 convulsed the Commonwealth ;—rode it out in comparative safety and with considerable ease. But keeping steadily before our eyes the object of investigation proposed at the beginning of this history, as to the causes of the early and evil ending of this promising and flourishing Florentine social system, it will appear, I think, that there were circumstances both in the nature of this Ciompi outbreak itself, and yet more alarmingly in the nature of the means adopted to put it down, and guard against a recurrence of it, which ought to have inspired a long-sighted statesman with fears for the future of his country.

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A civil war between different local regions of the same state is bad. A war between two opposing opinions, whether respecting religion or any other subject, is worse. But most to be deprecated of all civil contests is a war between social classes; and the most terrible of all wars of this sort, is that which raises the lowest class of all against the rest of the community,—which ranges those who have absolutely nothing against all who possess anything. A.D. 1378.

And this was the nature of that Ciompi rising in the year 1378, which has ever since stood out in the eyes of the descendants of the two parties who then struggled against each other, as one of the great epochs and landmarks of their history.

It has been seen throughout the whole course of this history how persistently and invariably the social tendencies have progressed in the same direction. First, the busy citizens within their new walls, desirous only of pursuing their industry in peace, undertook a perfectly justifiable warfare against the territorial bandit barons, who circled the young community about on all sides, and rendered peaceful industry impossible. The democracy was deservedly and almost uniformly successful in these wars. Nor was the youthful burgher community disposed to use its victories cruelly. "Only change your evil and noxious mode of life," it said to the nobles whose castles it had harried, "and become as we are. Our walls are open to you. Come among us, and live like useful and peaceful citizens, instead of anti-social ruffians and robbers." And the harried nobles, for the most part, accepted the invitation, and came into the city. But the leopard cannot change his spots so easily. They were of a different race, those old nobles, with other instincts, other tendencies, other ideas. They felt themselves to be so;—and the citizens among whom they had taken up their abode felt them to be so. Thence the old Ghibelline exterminations.



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A.D. 1378. And Ghibellinism was well nigh exterminated. And the citizens said to themselves, "Now we are all '*popolo*,'—all citizens and democrats alike. Now we can attend to our manufactures and our trade in peace, and rule our city ourselves after our own fashion. Now we are all free and equal!" But leaders were needed even for this putting down of Ghibellinism, and for this declaring that all were free and equal. It was an easy matter to provide and take care that these leaders should be traders instead of territorial nobles; but to do without leaders was not so easy. And these trading leaders, who had only come to be such because they had more brains in their heads or vigour in their muscles than their fellows, traded more than those their fellows, who were not their equals, though they said they were. They became richer, greater, more powerful;—left their riches and their influence to their sons;—became great,—"*grandi*;"—and lo! there was all the equalization work to be done over again. And the charge against these new grandees, that they were every bit as bad as the old grandees in their social tendencies, and habits and ways of thinking, was a perfectly true charge. It was true that as fast as they got to be grandees, their sympathies and fellow-feeling were for and with the grandees whom they had helped to hurl down from their pedestals, rather than with that *popolo* who had laboured with them in the work. This phenomenon sadly puzzled the perplexed and angered democracy of the most republican of republics. How to get ourselves and our city ruled well, wisely, and effectually, without allowing the rulers to be any bigger or better men than ourselves? That was the question which Florence was ever trying to solve. By recurring violences, repeated proscriptions, by new constitutions, multiplied magistracies, and reiterated and unlimited balloting it was sought to solve it. Choice by lottery above all! No people under heaven ever had so

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potent a faith in the virtue of hap-hazard. "*Borse*," purses, bags into which the names of all citizens should be put, and drawn by chance, for all offices of trust or power. That was the grand plan! For how else can we prevent our ruler from getting to be greater than we? If we appoint the most able, his very ability will help him to put the yoke on our necks. If we keep the choice of him arbitrarily in our own hands, there will be canvassing and bribing, and how can we trust each other in the matter? *That* at all events we will not do! Men deceive! We will *trust* no man! Better trust chance! So we will have a ruler by right divine of hap-hazard. Then at all events I am as likely to be king as you! And in order that every dog may have his day, and we may be all kings in our turn, we will reduce the term of office to two months. There surely can be no danger of a man making himself great in that time. But in order to make that danger less, and to ensure that our hap-hazard ruler does his duty and nothing but his duty, we will have other hap-hazard-chosen powers to watch him, and make him do his work! A.D. 1378.

All the unceasing efforts, the continually changing devices, the ever fresh inventions of new "*balie*," magistracies, and boards, "the Eight" for this purpose, "the Ten" for that, "the Thirty" for the superintendence of the election of the Ten, and so on almost *ad infinitum*, were so many schemes to obviate the danger of the rulers acquiring too much power, and the necessity of placing any trust in them.

It will hardly seem surprising to many persons now-a-days that all these tentatives did not compass the end for the attainment of which they were devised. But it is surprising in no small degree that such a political constitution should have worked as favourably as it did.



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A.D. 1378. The three years' war with the Papal Court, which Florence had waged with unflinching spirit, and which was brought to an end only by the death of Pope Gregory the Eleventh, had been managed entirely by a "*balia*" or Board of Eight, elected exclusively from the democratic party in the city. And it had been carried on in all respects with the utmost energy, prudence, wisdom, and patriotism. The Eight had won the approbation of the Florentines so completely that the epithet "Holy" was, rather by universal consent and habit than by virtue of any formal decree, applied to their board; and the "Eight of War" were familiarly and habitually styled "*I Santi*" —the Saints—by their fellow-citizens.

A war against the Papal power must always be a specially difficult one for a catholic people, and above all for an Italian people to wage. The general political condition of Italy also still further made the task which the Florentine "Saints" had to accomplish a very arduous one. With a totally unprincipled and able Visconti wielding all the power of northern Italy, perfectly ready to play fast and loose, to change sides at a moment's notice, and to ally himself with anybody who seemed most likely to serve for the time the purposes of his own restless and all-grasping ambition; with a Papacy that during its residence in feudal France had drifted far away from the traditions and principles of Guelphism, and under a perfectly unscrupulous Pope was not even genuinely Italian or even ecclesiastical in its schemes and views; and with a number of free cities, its neighbours all watchful to seek their own safety amid the storm by any sudden change of the course they were steering that might seem expedient for the present moment,—these popularly elected burgher *Santi*, called from their shops to administer a great war, well merited the enthusiastic admiration and gratitude of their fellow-citizens if they succeeded, as they did succeed,

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in so carrying it on as to uphold the honour and prestige of their country. A.D. 1378.

But the difficulties which have been mentioned were not the sole or the worst against which the "Holy Eight" had to contend. Enthusiastically supported by the democracy and the body of the people, they and their party, and the war which they were carrying on, were extremely obnoxious and distasteful to that aristocratic party in the Commonwealth,—those "*Grandi*" who reproduced themselves with the pertinacity of hydra's heads, as fast as the preceding race of them had been proscribed, exiled, or ruined. These "*Grandi*" now were no longer territorial nobles, with feudal titles given by German Emperors. They were indubitable Florentine burghers and tradesmen. "Only a very little while ago they were not '*Grandi*' at all! They were '*popolo*' like us, and helped us to pull down and punish other '*Grandi*.' And now . . . . ! Here they are opposing and plotting against our '*Santi*' and the war, having sympathy and fellow-feeling not with us at all, but with other '*Grandi*' of foreign parts;—with this abominable French Pope and his French cardinals, who are no longer Guelphs at all, as in the good old times, but regular Ghibellines, and consorters with Kings and Emperors and such like Ghibelline cattle! We said long since that we would have none in power in Florence who were not enrolled in one of our trade guilds. And that turned out to be of no good. They enrolled themselves, and remained as much '*Grandi*' as ever. We tried again, and insisted that they should in reality practise the business to which they professed to belong,—that they should be effectually and *bonâ fide* tradesmen. They have done so, and are more *Grandi* than before! *Per la Santa Madonna!* It is time to change all this!"

These were the feelings which were smouldering in the workshops of Florence in the spring of 1378, and which

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A.D. 1378. were from day to day coming nearer to the point of bursting into flame. Brawny arms of sturdy wool-carders and combers gesticulated fiercely as the news of the war was discussed, and rumours circulated of obstacles thrown in the way of the "*Santi*" by the aristocrats. Half-naked dyers, savage-looking and hideously gaunt from the disfigurement incidental to their toil, held angry council on the evil condition of the Commonwealth as they paused from work around their vats in the steaming cavern-like cellars in which their trade was carried on, or under the cover of the huge beetling roofs which sheltered, amid a gloomy labyrinth of heavy timbers, the drying-place for their products. Tanners and hide-dressers came forth from the retreats among which their unsavoury trade hid itself, in a manner rarely witnessed save on the eve of public disturbances.

And Florence had before now seen her streets running with blood, and her palaces in flames, and her entire population divided into two hostile camps, for smaller cause than really now existed to excite the popular anger and discontent. For the complaints which have been mentioned, and which were those that might have been heard loudly uttered among the citizens, were very far from indicating the worst evil that was preying on the community and exasperating the populace. It was the terrible and intolerable tyranny of the *Capitani di Parte Guelfa*, which was in truth a sufficient cause to produce insurrection among a much more long-suffering population than that of Florence. But this portion of the popular grievances was but little spoken of, or spoken of only in the most cautious whispers, and among the nearest and most thoroughly trusted friends. And in Florence few men, if any, had such friends. For the dread inspired by this magistracy was such as cowed the entire city into abject terror. No Venetian ever dreaded the fearful "Ten" more horribly

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than the Florentine of that day dreaded the terrible and irresponsible power of the "*Capitani di Parte Guelfa.*" A.D. 1378.

The establishment of this tremendous magistracy has been related in a former Book, and the monstrous and intolerable nature of the power entrusted to it was at the same time pointed out. In practice the tyranny thus organized had turned out to be to the full as atrocious as might have been expected. Despite the clumsy and inefficient machinery provided to ensure an indifferent election of these terrible *Capitani* from among the citizens, means were found for causing the choice to fall continually on the members of a small clique. This clique was entirely aristocratic in its composition, and the Albizzi were the most powerful and prominent leaders of it. The Ricci also had latterly become very influential, and though they belonged to the same party in the Commonwealth, there was a great mutual jealousy and enmity between them and the Albizzi.

"So great," says Ammirato, "was the dread and terror of that magistracy which had fallen on the citizens, that no tyrant immediately after the discovery of a conspiracy was so formidable to his subjects as the magistracy of the *Parte Guelfa* had become to its fellow-citizens. Whenever they passed in the city the people might be seen to rise from their seats and bow and cringe before them, just as is practised towards absolute sovereigns and despots by their subjects. To speak ill of any member of that board of magistrates was a very far more dangerous thing than to blaspheme the holy name of God and his saints. The citizens sought to make alliances by marriage with them, even though such alliances might be otherwise most disadvantageous. The shopkeepers readily gave them their goods on credit, and then did not dare to ask for payment of them. And to this end they had people adapted to the working of their tyranny, whose business it was to run up

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A.D. 1378. and down the city and threaten prosecutions or promise favours according to the requirements of the case in hand. And this plot against the liberties of Florence was so arranged, that although the Captains of the Guelph Party were changed at short intervals, yet the office was always kept among a certain clique of families." *

The mode in which this fearful tyranny was exercised has been in some degree explained in the preceding pages. And the sentiment in the public mind, which had first made the erection of it possible, offers a very remarkable instance of the persistent vitality and power of party names. Ghibellinism was in Florence the accursed thing from which the city was to be purified. Ghibellinism was to the Florentine citizen of the lower orders what a red rag is to an enraged bull. It has been shown that there was a considerable analogy between Florentine Ghibellinism and English Toryism,—that to be infected with Ghibellinism was to be understood to be hostile to the people, and to the popular liberties;—to wish to reduce Florence to a despotism;—to have foreign sympathies and friendships with princes and despots;—to have, in a word, aristocratic and anti-popular tendencies, ideas, connections, and aspirations. Every sociologist knows how such endemic notions and passions become violent and uncontrollable in accurate proportion to their unreasonableness, and to the total absence of any foundation for them save mere vague prejudice. And no man in Florence dared to say that it was otherwise than good to purge out, persecute, and put down Ghibellinism by any and every means that could be devised. Every man felt that the smallest word of the sort would have sufficed to bring the vague but horrible and dangerous charge upon himself. Such a tyranny as that established by the "*Capitani di Parte*

* Ammirato, lib. xiii. Conf. 515.

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*Guelfa*" is the due and legitimate Nemesis of a Society which has permitted itself thus to fall under the rule of unreason and selfish terrors; and could not be established save in a Society debased by them. A.D. 1378.

It has been stated that the power of the board thus entrusted with the duty of purging out every trace of Ghibellinism from the city extended over the life of any citizen whom it seemed good to them to declare infected with that sin. But it was in the discretion of the Captains whether they would take away the physical or only the civil lives of their victims. And in practice they rarely took more than the latter. The citizen found guilty of Ghibellinism, or as the phrase went in Florence, "admonished," was thereby declared ineligible to any of the offices of the Commonwealth. And this was sufficient for the purposes of the party that wielded the weapon;—sufficient to cause every head in Florence to be bowed before them in abject terror, and sufficient for the great and prime end for which the engine was invented,—the retaining of the government of the State in the hands of a select clique or oligarchy.

Of course, nothing could be clearer than that these "Captains" were in truth the only men in Florence who were at that time guilty of the crimes and misdemeanours which constituted the popular idea of Ghibellinism. But, as usual, the potent glamour of a well-worked party name took from the popular eye all power of perceiving that fact.

The successful war against the Papacy, which had lasted for three years before the peace at the death of Gregory XI. in 1378, had been wholly carried on, as has been said, by the democratic party, from the ranks of which the Eight, canonized by the popular enthusiasm, had been exclusively chosen. It had been extremely distasteful to the aristocrats of the party of the Captains,

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A.D. 1378. who pretended that the purity of their Guelphism was offended by a war against the Holy See, which, in fact, as the reader will remember, had of old times always been the head and mainstay of Guelphism in Italy. But the truth was that all these old party landmarks had been moved. The feudalized, un-Italianized French Papacy, after its seventy years' tenure by Frenchmen, under the shadow of French royalty, had lost every trace and flavour of the old Guelphism, or of the qualities which had once made the Italian democracy feel drawn to rally round it, as a defence against Imperial and ultramontane despotism. The Guelph Captains were equally using the power of their office for purposes which differed in no respect from those of old-world Ghibellinism. So that in the general change of places in the dance, which the "whirligig of time" had brought about, these false Guelph Captains were still on the side of the un-Romanized Papacy.

There was another figure moving on the political scene in Florence at that time, too, strangely different from aught existing or possible in the world in these latter centuries, and too curiously characteristic of the social condition of that old time, to be passed altogether without mention, though little permanent influence on the march of Florentine politics was exercised by the phenomenon.

Between the democracy represented by the "*Santi*" engaged in pushing on the war against the Pope, and the aristocracy represented by the Captains of the Guelph Party, who wished for submission to the Pontiff and peace, was coming and going in the streets of Florence a frail emaciated figure, reduced almost to a skeleton by an originally weakly constitution and by unheard-of excesses of asceticism, with eyes fixed on the ground, and hands clasped on her fleshless bosom, wearing the habit of a Dominican nun. This was the world-celebrated Saint

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Catherine, the daughter of a poor dyer of Siena, the seer of visions, worker of miracles, and correspondent and adviser of Pontiffs, Cardinals, and Kings. Whether she were saint or impostor, or simply the dupe and tool of impostors, or whether she were all these, as is most probable, and in what proportions, it would lead us much too far away from the high road which we have to follow, to inquire. "By some she was held to be an evil woman, even as in more recent times similar opinions were held of Girolamo Savonarola," says Ammirato.* The Church has decided that her claims to saintship were abundantly made good. And the Church could not well do less, for the vision-seeing dyer's daughter was above all the supporter and patroness of the Church and of priestly power. A.D. 1378.

Catherine had been sent by the "Eight of War" to Avignon on an embassy to the Pope to make a treaty of peace, if it were practicable. And she had accomplished much towards that end. For war with the Holy See was of course an abomination to the Saint. But when she returned to Florence, and a continuance of the war was decided on, she was indignantly opposed to all who would not submit themselves on any terms to the will of the Church; and thus became a very available tool in the hands of the Captains of the Guelph Party. They set her to preach in favour of the system of "admonitions," which the Saint, caring and understanding little, as may be imagined, about the principles of civil liberty, understanding only that the men to be thus punished and silenced were the enemies of Holy Mother Church and rebels against her authority, very willingly did. And the Captains used to the utmost her heaven-vouched authority in favour of each "admonition" issued by them, which carried with it the civil death of an opponent.

* Lib. xiii. Gonf. 515.

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A.D. 1378. The celebrated letters of St. Catherine, which are extant to the extent of several octavo volumes, and which indeed have recently been reprinted, as still affording a very edifying subject of study to the faithful sons of Mother Church, indicate, not only, as might be supposed, an intelligence of a very low order, and an all-devouring spiritual vanity truly remarkable, but a deficiency to a much greater degree than might have been supposed of any of the graces of rhetoric or eloquence. But there are to be found in these letters traces of a singleness and intensity of will which constitute of themselves a power, and a wordy iterative glibness of fervency which was well calculated to move the masses of a people less self-centred, and endowed with far weaker powers of volition. Catherine was, therefore, a power in the hands of the Captains and the aristocratic party.

But, as is ever the case, when it is sought to influence masses of men in the conduct of their secular affairs by an appeal to such sanctions and sentiments as those to which St. Catherine addressed herself, the use of these arms envenomed and embittered the hostility of the opposing parties. It is always so, because such appeals address themselves not to any one opinion or conviction, or to any set of opinions and convictions, but to the whole idiosyncrasy of the mind. Those who are moved by them are a different sort of men from those who are not moved by them ;—not holding different views merely on certain points of policy or speculation, but altogether different in construction and tone of mind, in likings and dislikings ;—different and distasteful to each other. The importation, therefore, of such an element into any contest which is dividing mankind never fails to make the division more radical and more profound. It is sure to add personal dislike to the mere difference of opinion. It makes the contest,—to use a trivial but expressive image,—a dog

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and cat quarrel;—a quarrel that is carried on not for the sake of any special object in dispute, but because the dog is a dog, and the cat a cat;—because they are creatures of a different sort;—different not in some one of their ways, but in all their ways of seeing and feeling things in general. The interference of St. Catherine embittered the hostility of the two parties in Florence, even as in a yet more marked and notorious degree the agency of Savonarola produced a similar effect in the following century. A.D. 1378.

In this state of things the aristocratic party, with the Captains of the Guelph Party at their head, would have long since used their power to crush the war, if they had dared to do so. But the popular feeling ran so high in favour of the "*Santi*" of the War Board, that it was deemed too strong a measure to be safe to attack them by means of "admonitions." Again and again had the Captains longed to exert their power against the obnoxious *Otto di Guerra*. There was no constitutional power to prevent them from doing so. They had nothing to do but to issue one of their irresponsible and unquestionable "admonitions" against any one of *the Saints*, in order to drive him from the conduct of public affairs on the instant. But they let "I dare not wait upon I would;" for they feared a general rising of the people, if they ventured on such a step. And thus matters continued in a state of extreme "tension," as it is the modern fashion to call such a condition of the political atmosphere, till the spring of 1378.

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## CHAPTER II.

Tumulto dei Ciompi—Giovanni Dini, one of the "Santi," admonished—Salvestro de' Medici, Gonfaloniere—Attempts at negotiation between the parties—The aristocratic party break faith with their opponents—Night-sitting of the "Capitani di Parte Guelfa"—Messer Bettino Ricasoli—Indignation in the city—Salvestro de' Medici at the Palace—His speech—Meeting in the Palazzo of the Parte Guelfa—Scene in the great hall of the Palazzo Pubblico—Rising in the city—A lull in the storm—The guilds march out—Violence of the minor guilds—The city entirely in the hands of the rioters—St. John's day in Florence in 1378—Hasty annulment of the worst laws of the "Parte Guelfa"—Entry of the new Signory on the 1st July—Tumultuous presentation of a petition—The Signory yield—Fresh disturbances—Peace with Rome—Contentment of the people—Scene in the chapel of the Palazzo Pubblico—Demands of the people—The Signory send for troops from the neighbouring communities—Simoncino tortured at the Palazzo—Nature of the suspicions entertained by the Signory—Simoncino incriminates Salvestro de' Medici—Hurried measures of defence against the popular masses—The torture of Simoncino and others made known to the people—General insurrection—The guilds called by the Signory to protect the city against the populace do not move—Interview between the Signory and Salvestro—Burning and plundering in all parts of the city—Creation of Cavalieri by the people—The insurrection continues—The city treasure saved from pillage—The wardens of the guilds confer with the populace—The mob make themselves masters of the "Palazzo del Podestà"—The mob treat with the Government—Their demands—The Signory concede all asked of them—The mob demand that the Signory shall evacuate the "Palazzo Pubblico"—Imbecility of the Signory—They leave the Palace—Michele Lando at the Palace—He restores order in the city—Character and results of the Tumulto dei Ciompi.

At last, in the spring of 1378, the Captains did venture to admonish Giovanni Dini, one of the "*Santi;*" and the popular indignation at the step was very nearly boiling

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over.* Nevertheless, for a few months longer, nothing save deep ominous grumblings, far down among the foundations of the body social, gave warning that the storm was at hand. A.D. 1378.

On the first of May a new Signory entered into office for the ensuing two months as usual, and the new Gonfaloniere was one Salvestro de' Medici. He was a great enemy to the "Admonition" system, and to the *Capitani*, and their party; and would have been at once, we are told, hurled from his position as Gonfaloniere by an admonition, had it not been for fear of the people.† For this Salvestro de' Medici makes his first appearance as a leader and favourite of the people, and the protector of popular rights against the aristocrats and "*Grandi.*" Instead of launching an admonition against him, therefore, the first object of "the Party," (as the clique, who by means of the Captains, and by calling themselves Guelphs, had got the main part of the power of the State into their hands, are continually called by the historians,) was to endeavour to come to an understanding with him. They were disposed to make considerable sacrifices and yield much. For there were signs abroad in the Florentine social atmosphere which betokened stormy weather, and this new popular tribune, this Medici, made his appearance on the political stage in a guise which gave the predominant faction considerable alarm.

It was not altogether his first appearance; for he had been Gonfaloniere in 1370. But matters had not then been ripe for the attempt which he was now determined to make, for the restraining of the inordinate power of the *Capitani*. Nevertheless, he did not think it wise to refuse the overtures made to him by them. Their terms were that the "*Ordini di Giustizia*" should be revived and

* Ammirato, lib. xiii. Gonf. 517.

† Coppo Stefani, lib. x. rubr. dccxcviii.

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A.D. 1378. again put into force against the "*Grandi*," as in old times; that no one should be admonished "unless he were really Ghibelline,"—a curious stipulation, which indicates the point of barefaced abuse to which the admonishing power had been pushed;—and that the admonition of no citizen should be put to the vote at the board of Captains more than three times;—a provision, the scope and meaning of which we shall very shortly see.

With this understanding Salvestro agreed to be content; and things would assuredly, says Coppo Stefani,* have gone on quietly for the while, if the *Capitani* had kept faith with him. But this they did not do. The habit of exercising despotic power becomes too inextricably a part of the moral nature that has been debauched by it, to be suddenly laid aside even at the most peremptory warning of prudence.

One evening in the following June, the second and last month of the Gonfaloniereship of Salvestro de' Medici, at a night-sitting of the board of Captains the names of two citizens of no special note were proposed for admonition. The measure was put to the vote three times and rejected. Upon which Ghino di Bernardo Anselmi, one of the nine Captains, observing that it would not be prudent to break so soon the agreement made with the Gonfaloniere, arose and left the meeting. But no sooner had he gone than, in despite of the recent convention, the president of the board put the question of admonishing the two citizens again and again to the vote, in order to force a condemnation. But there were some there, whose prudence was greater than their love of power; and the board continually refused to vote the desired condemnation. When this had gone on till midnight another of the remaining eight of the Captains got up to leave the meeting. Whereupon

* Lib. x. rubr. dcclxxxix.

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the chairman, whose name was Messer Bettino Ricasoli, sprang to his feet and seized the key of the chamber, swearing with a frightfully blasphemous oath that not a man should leave the room till the condemnation was voted. And this at last was done by the intimidated or wearied members of the board, after the question had been put to the vote three and twenty times. A.D. 1378.

But Florence was no longer in a humour to endure so flagrant an act of tyranny and faithlessness. When the facts became known the next morning, there was much commotion in the city, and the indignation was general and deep.*

On that day Salvestro de' Medici, being, as it chanced, on that 18th of June chairman of the Signory or board of Priors—"a rank which for the time it lasts is almost equivalent to the sovereignty of the city"†—and as such having the power of proposing measures to the board, first took steps for calling an assembly of the people in the great hall of the Palazzo Pubblico; and then, while the citizens were gathering together there, brought forward in the council chamber of the Signory, which was situated in another part of the immense building, a law for the repressing of the tyranny of the "*Grandi*," and especially the Captains of the Party Guelph. But a majority of the Priors were timid, and two of them at least belonged to the party of the *Grandi*, and the Captains. They were both of them Priors for the ward of Santo Spirito, the quarter of the city on the southern or further bank of the Arno;—a curious indication that that part of the city was still, as we have seen it used to be in the old time, the especial quarter of the aristocracy. The result was that Salvestro's measure was rejected. Whereupon he at once left the council

* Coppo Stefani, lib. x. rubr. dcclxxxix.

† Machiavelli Istoria Fiorentine, lib. iii. p. 180, v. 1, edit. Capolego, 1842.



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A.D. 1378. chamber, and hurrying to the neighbouring hall, where the people were by that time assembled, made a speech calculated to stir to the utmost the angry passions that were already seething in the multitude.

"Citizens!" he said;—(the words are the real ones absolutely used, having been taken down by Gino Capponi at the time;*—and is it not curious to find a Bettino Ricasoli and a Gino Capponi in deadly opposition treading these same halls, where the other day † their descendants of the same name were side by side voting the extinction of Florence as a seat of government?)—"Citizens!" said the rising Medici, "I have striven to-day to purge this city of the pestilent tyranny of the great and overbearing! But I have not been permitted to do so; for my colleagues will not allow it. Yet it would have been for the welfare of the citizens and of the entire city. But I have not been listened to nor believed, nor received the attention due to your Gonfaloniere. Since I am powerless therefore to do good, I will no longer hold office either as Prior or Gonfaloniere. I shall retire to my own house; and you may make whom you will Gonfaloniere!" ‡

And with that Salvestro turned to leave the hall. But of course he was not permitted to do so. The speech had fallen on the prepared dry leaves, and the assembly was in a blaze in an instant.

Meanwhile the Captains, and the leaders of the aristocratic party, well aware that danger was at hand, were holding a meeting in the palace § belonging to that magistracy. The chiefs of the party thus assembled, says Coppo Stefani, were Lapo da Castiglionchio, Carlo degli Strozzi

* Caso o Tumulto dei Ciompi dell' anno 1378, scritto da Gino Capponi, Rev. Ital. Script. Muratori, tom. xviii. p. 1104.

† At the time of the annexation of Tuscany to Piedmont.

‡ Compare the more rhetorical version of this speech given by Machiavelli, *ibid.*

§ It was situated in the Mercato Nuovo.

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with his sons, Piero degli Albizzi, Niccolò Soderini and Bartolo Siminetti.* After naming these, the historian goes on to enumerate the rank and file of the party. But it is worthy of observation that not one of those named of the chiefs, who were assembled in the palace,—the office, as we should say;—of the *Capitani di Parte Guelfa*, were at that time among the Captains. What business then had they to be where they were? The circumstance shows how completely and barefacedly the magistracy of the *Capitani* had been made a mere party engine for the promotion of the objects of the aristocratic faction. A.D. 1378.

One of those assembled, Carlo Strozzi, had gone out to the Palazzo Pubblico to see how matters were turning, and had ventured into the great hall.

"Carlo! Carlo!" cried a sturdy shoemaker,† seizing the great and wealthy citizen by the collar, as he passed amid the tumultuous crowd in the hall, "Matters shall go differently in Florence from what you flatter yourself; and the time is come for an end to your packed majorities!"‡

How quaint a bit of the old republican life does this stray gleam of light photograph for us, as it shows us the action and the mode of address of the shoemaker to the burgher noble!

Carlo Strozzi got him back as quickly as he might to his friends in the Mercato Nuovo with no comfortable tidings. For even as he had turned on his heel to escape from the taunts of the shoemaker, Nerozzo degli Alberti had sprung to one of the windows of the Palazzo Pubblico, shouting to the people, who were already thronging the Piazza, "*Viva il Popolo!*"—"Hurrah for the people!"

* Coppo Stefani, lib. x., rubr. dcexc.

† Named Benedetto di Carlone.

‡ Machiavelli says, on what authority I know not,—certainly not on that of the contemporary account of Gino Capponi, that Strozzi would have been murdered by the artisans had he not been rescued by his friends.—Machiavelli, Istoria, p. 181.



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A.D. 1378. It was well known what that meant in Florence! And in a very few minutes all the shops were shut throughout the city. Nevertheless the confusion at the Palazzo Pubblico was quieted, and the citizens separated peaceably. But those who understood Florence knew that the fire had been kindled, and that the blaze would not have to be long waited for. And during all that night the citizens watched, each in his own house, and armed themselves for the struggle which they well knew was at hand.

On the morrow, which was a Saturday, no shops were opened. Florence was heaving with the throes of coming trouble; but the city still remained quiet. On the Sunday there were numerous meetings of the people; but still after an orderly fashion. The guilds all held assemblies, and each of them appointed a Syndic. On the Monday these representatives betook themselves to the Palazzo Pubblico; and the whole day was consumed in vain attempts to concert some terms of agreement, which should satisfy the people, and in which the opposite party would be disposed to concur. Though nothing was accomplished in this sense, the town was still tranquil; though it was the brooding tranquillity that precedes a tempest. The people, armed and sullenly watchful, were content to wait, and see whether the menace of their force might be sufficient, or whether it would be necessary for them to strike.

On the Tuesday morning, nothing having been done by counsel, the symptoms became more menacing. The guilds marched out in armed bodies with their Gonfalons flying. In an instant the news that this demonstration was beginning to take place, and that the "*Arti*" in their force might in a few minutes be expected in the Piazza, was carried to the Signory in the Palace. The trembling Priors caused the great bell, whose well-known tones were so fateful in Florence, to be sounded, and assembling in all haste, summoned the members of several of the various

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boards of magistracy to their aid. But it was too late! The time for counsel was past. Even as the different magistracies were hurriedly assembling in the Palace, the Gonfalons of the *Arti* began to defile into the Piazza, to shouts of "*Viva il Popolo! Popolo! Popolo!*" A.D. 1378.

But worse than this was already being done on that fatal Tuesday morning in June. The "*Arti*," who had contented themselves with showing their armed strength under the windows of the Palace in the Piazza, were of the "*Maggiori*," and more educated and responsible guilds. At the same time, the rougher and ruder men of the lesser "*Arti*,"—the furriers especially are mentioned;—were rushing to the palaces of the most obnoxious of the chief of the aristocrat party. First the houses of Messer Lapo di Castiglionchio and his clan * were sacked and burned. From thence the rioters ran to the Buondelmonte houses, and treated them similarly. Next the palace of Bartolo Simonetti in the Mercato Nuovo shared the same fate. In a few minutes more the Pazzi and the Strozzi † palaces were blazing in different quarters of the city. Then came the turn of the Albizzi towers and houses, and at last the mob, now entirely masters of the city, crossed the Arno, and sacked and burned house after house in that aristocratic quarter.

But in the midst of these disorders, the usual result of redressless oppression which has become intolerable, a worse symptom, and one ominous of yet deeper-seated and

* His "*consorti*;"—his "*consorteria*." The two phrases are of constant occurrence in Tuscan history; and signify the union of several families closely connected together by intermarriages, or by descent from a common ancestor. The term "clan" partially, but not altogether exactly, expresses the meaning.

† Not of course the magnificent mansion which every visitor to modern Florence knows under that name, which was founded more than a hundred years subsequently by a descendant of the obnoxious Carlo Strozzi, who was now the object of the popular hatred.

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A.D. 1378. more fatal malady in the body social, began to manifest itself. It is indeed no unexampled manifestation of human perversity and baseness, that times of public disorder and confusion should be seized by private hatred as opportunities for wreaking its vengeance. But the frequency with which this was done on this occasion, the readiness with which the fact was recognized, and the nature and cause of the resentments which were thus gratified, are such as to give the reader an unpleasant idea of the moral atmosphere prevailing in the community. The houses of Messer Migliori Guadagni were burned. And it was known that his own son-in-law, a Covoni, had put the torch to them;—understood too, readily enough, that he did so because Guadagni had been supposed to be a consenting party when the Covoni family had been struck by "admonition." The Canigiani palaces in the Via dei Bardi were given to the flames, as was understood, by their neighbours the Mannelli, because a Canigiani had been one of the Captains when one of the Mannelli had been admonished.

The rioting of the day had commenced by the destruction of the residence and property of those who had made themselves especially obnoxious to the masses of the people by their oppression and tyranny; and the punishment which fell on them might be regarded, at least by the inflictors of it, as a wild kind of justice. But the inevitable tendency of lawless violence is to proceed rapidly from the particular to the general, and to discover that its real quarrel is with all law and order, its natural enemies. So before the setting of that Tuesday's sun, the lowest of the populace were pillaging and destroying indiscriminately. The prisons were broken into, and thrown open. Monasteries, to which numbers of citizens, as was usually the case on the first menace of disorder, had carried their valuables for safety, were broken open, and sacked. In one case several

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friars were killed in the attempt to protect what had been intrusted to their keeping. At Santo Spirito, where another crowd were attempting the same thing, Piero di Fronte, one of the Priors, a wool-merchant, rode up, and by the bold exertion of his authority, dispersed the crowd for the moment, and caused three who were in the act of carrying off property from the convent to be hung by the neck there and then. Had it not been for the energy and courage of this same citizen, the public treasury would have been sacked. A crowd of the lowest of the populace from the regions of San Frediano, and St. Piero Gattolino,—the Leghorn and Roman gates of the city —were in the act of breaking into the building, when Piero di Fronte rode up, and again dispersed them. "And with that came the darkness; and all night long most anxious guard was kept by the Gonfalons of the Companies."* A.D. 1378.

It is noticeable that these "Gonfalons of the *Arti*," which were marching out in the morning of that disastrous day in opposition to the government, and were hurrahing "*Viva il Popolo*" on the Piazza, and which were in fact the originators of the insurrectionary movement, are spoken of, when sun-down came, as the protectors of the city, and the champions of order. The truth, as is very evident, was that, as usual in such cases, the "movement" had already passed out of their hands into those of a more dangerous class. The members of the guilds had intended to overawe the Signory, and especially the *Capitani di Parte Guelfa*, by a display of armed force, and, perhaps, at the utmost, to inflict vengeance on some of the more prominent and obnoxious of the aristocratic party. But the moving power of insurrectionary violence, once got up, cannot be turned off at pleasure, like that of a well-constructed

* Gino Capponi, from whose special account of these tumults, quoted above, all these particulars have been taken.

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A.D. 1378. steam-engine. And these respectable burghers of the guilds, who had thought that a little taste of insurrection would be a useful quickener of the resolutions of the Signory, were, before nightfall, anxiously taking precautions for the safety of their own and the general property.

The next morning, the Wednesday, was the Vigil of St. John, the patron saint of Florence, whose anniversary was, and is, the greatest Florentine holiday of all the year. But the festal day found Florence in no festal guise that Wednesday morning. The streets were in very many places barricaded, as a means of defence against the bands of insurgents; the whole city was armed; none had thought of taking any rest in bed; in every house the inmates were keeping watch and ward, as in a besieged castle.

Nevertheless there was a lull in the storm, and the different magistracies, together with the syndics, who had been appointed by the different guilds, as has been mentioned, were formed into a "*balia*," or board, with very extensive powers. They were eighty in number, and were accordingly called "*Gli Ottanta.*" This body forthwith proceeded to pass in haste a series of laws almost annulling the most objectionable statutes of the party Guelph; and specially enacting, that any citizen who had been "admonished" might present his petition to the Signory to be purged and cleared of his "admonition," and restored to all the rights of citizenship. They further rewarded a few citizens of the upper classes, who had adhered to the popular side, by making them "*popolani*," and punished some of the "*popolani*" by making them "*grandi.*" The most prominent and most hated of the party of the *Capitani* were declared traitors, and banished from the city.

Nevertheless the city remained full of barricades, and crowded with countrymen from the surrounding district,

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who had been brought into the city by wealthy citizens to assist them in protecting their shops and dwellings. No shops were opened; all doors were kept jealously bolted; and vigilant watch was kept day and night. And this state of things lasted during the whole of that month of June. A.D. 1378.

On the first of July a new Signory had to come into office; and by good fortune the members elected were tranquil and peace-loving citizens, respected by the people, and well calculated to bring the city back to its normal condition. But they entered on their office, and took up their residence in the Palazzo Pubblico as quietly as possible, without sound of bell, without a processional entry, without any of the usual ceremony,—a thing, says Capponi,* which had never been known before since Florence was a city.

The first care of the new Signory was to restore Florence to its usual appearance and occupations. And the orders which they sent through the city to this effect, directing the barricades to be removed,—the shops to be opened,—and the countrymen to quit the city "on pain of death," were universally obeyed. And Florence, in outward appearance at least, was herself again. And everything remained perfectly quiet for the following ten days.

On the 11th, the guilds, at the instigation of the citizens who had been under admonition, presented a petition to the government, demanding a more speedy and more complete restoration of the admonished to their rights and franchises. And they again turned out in arms, and with their Gonfalons at their head, in support of the petition. The government took the hint, and hastily accorded it; and again the city was restored to tranquillity . . . for a few days.

But the tranquillity was only on the surface. There

* Tumulto dei Ciompi, *loc. cit.*, p. 1108.

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A.D. 1378. was still working among the masses of the people that same evil spirit of rancour and party hatred, which had always caused every party contest in Florence to end in proscriptions and violence. After a few days, new demands for the punishment and exile of members of the aristocratic party were made to the government. The Signory, trembling with the fear of seeing the city again in the hands of the mob, assured the popular leaders that everything should be done which they could reasonably desire. And a commission was appointed to confer with them, and learn the desires of the people. Of course, this discussion went into endless talk; and, of course, the friends of order, who had something to lose, were well contented as long as the talk could be prolonged, and tranquillity maintained by virtue of it. But it was equally of course that those who had nothing to lose soon began to think that there had been talking enough, and that it was time to do something. The men who had suffered from admonition were still smarting with their wrongs, and were eager not only for redress, but for vengeance. They kept moving among the lowest classes of the people, and exciting them to violence, by making them believe that the Signory were concerting means to inflict summary punishment on all those who had taken part in the late insurrection.

Capponi, who attributes all the evils that fell upon the city, to the anger of God against Florence for having waged war against the Church, hints that it would have been better, if the government really had put in execution such measures of severe punishment. But the new Gonfalonieri and Priors were anxious only to smooth all over, if possible, and restore peace and order.

As a means towards this, they had written to the Florentine ambassadors, who were then engaged at Rome in treating for peace with the new Pontiff, enjoining them to

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conclude a peace on the best terms they could; but at all events to conclude it. And on the morning of Sunday, the 18th of July, a messenger from Rome arrived in Florence bringing the olive branch, and letters containing the terms which had been agreed on. The main upshot was as usual;—Florence was to pay to the Holy See two hundred and fifty thousand golden florins. As usual, also, Florence seemed to think little of that. The people were called together to hear the letters read from the balcony in front of the Palazzo Pubblico; and they were well pleased that there was to be peace; and there were illuminations in Florence that night; and all was apparently content and rejoicing. A.D. 1378.

On the Monday the Signory had been engaged in a sitting at which the "Eight of War," the *Santi*, had offered, since the war was now ended, to give up their powers and retire. But the Priors declaring that there was still much to be done, and many affairs to be wound up, had refused to accept the resignation, and had persuaded "the Saints," probably without much difficulty, to continue in office. This business had been concluded, and the members of the Signory were about to separate, when tidings were brought to the palace, that the people were arranging a rising for the morrow; and that a certain Simoncino, if brought before the Priors, could tell them all about it. This man accordingly was sought out and brought at once to the palace. There the chairman of the Priors took him into the chapel,—that same quaint, dark, little chapel, which may still be seen, adjoining the council hall,—and in front of the altar, bade him tell all he knew.

Simoncino, therefore, confessed that the whole of the populace had banded themselves together, mainly from fear of the punishment to be inflicted on them for the riots of the preceding month; and that a general rising was to take place on the next day.

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A.D. 1378. "But what do the people propose to themselves?" asked the Prior; "what is it they want? Do they wish to undertake the government of the city themselves?"

Simoncino admitted they they did aspire to have a part in it. But specially all those various branches of artisans, who depended on the merchant-clothiers, and were governed by the officers of the great "*Arti della Lana*," the most powerful of all the Florentine guilds,—the carders, the combers, the washers, &c.—all complained that they were illtreated, underpaid, and subjected to oppressive regulations. They demanded, therefore, to be formed into a guild of their own; to be entirely independent of the merchant-clothiers; and as a separate guild to have of course their share in the offices and government of the city.

These demands are worth recording, as they very clearly indicate the direction in which the Commonwealth was moving, and the general tendency of the political progress.

The bold avowal which the examining Prior,—(whether it was Luigi Guicciardini who was the Gonfaloniere of the new Signoria, or one of the Priors, is not mentioned;)—heard from the rough artisan as they stood together before the altar in the dim little chapel in the inmost recesses of the huge Palace, which symbolized the majesty of the Commonwealth, startled and alarmed him not a little; and the demand that the absolutely lowest classes should share in the government of the State appeared to him utterly monstrous and absurd. It did not strike the worthy Prior at once, that a long and unbroken progress down a steep and slippery inclined plane is not easily brought to a sudden stop before the bottom of the slope is reached.

He hastened to communicate the substance of what he had heard to his colleagues, who endeavoured to obtain more detailed statements of the plot from Simoncino. Especially, they were anxious for the names of ring-

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leaders. Was there not some mover,—some instigator, some one at least, aware of what was intended, belonging to a different class of society from that of the insurgents? This was the only point on which Simoncino had appeared to show any inclination to be reticent. His story of the intended rising, and of the demands which the people purposed to put forward, was clear, spontaneous and straightforward enough. But there were symptoms of a tendency to evasion when this point was touched. A.D. 1378.

The Signory summoned in all haste several members of the many boards of magistracy to their aid, and at once dispatched letters by speedy messengers to various dependent or friendly communities in the neighbouring country, requesting them to send with the least possible delay armed men for the putting down of the expected insurrection by the strong hand. Then as the summer night was setting in, they held anxious counsel with the magistrates they had summoned, and who came hurrying into the palace in alarm at the sudden call at that hour of the night. The first result of their deliberations, very quickly arrived at, was that the hapless Simoncino should be put to the question. Torture perhaps might wring from him that utterance of a name,—that crimination of some guilty leader, for which they were so anxious.

For this was ever the haunting dread, the never absent bugbear of these popular communities, and especially of Florence, the most popularly constituted of them all; the notion that some one citizen was aiming at an undue share of greatness and power—perhaps, probably indeed, at the absolute lordship of the city. To us, as we read the story of these movements,—of the state of the popular mind, and of the circumstances which had led to that state, it seems very simple and natural to believe, that the tale told by Simoncino was simply true, and that the growing tendency of the lower populace to insist on standing on a

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A.D. 1378. political level with their richer fellow-citizens, was a sufficient and full explanation of the danger which now threatened the city. But it did not seem so to Florentines of the fourteenth century. Still the dread of despotism, of the "*governo di un solo*" was uppermost in the minds of those burgher magistrates. Though every shopkeeper had made good his claim to a share in the government, and now the very operatives, who laboured for daily wages paid by those shopkeepers, were insisting on their share of political power, still the most pressing fear seemed to them the danger that some one individual should be scheming to subject the community to his yoke. Was there not some ambitious man,—and worst and most intolerable of all, some rival, some fellow-citizen, who was wielding the popular violence, and plotting to spring into the saddle of supreme power, and override and overshadow all his fellows?

It must be admitted that the history of most of the neighbour communities of Italy did afford no little warrant for such a dread. It was just that which had happened, and was happening every day in most of them. Nor can it be asserted, that, if those magistrates who tortured the unlucky *popolano* in their hands to make him give up a name, could be supposed to be called on in some dialogue in the Elysian fields a century-and-a-half or so after their deaths, to justify their proceeding on that occasion, they would have seen any difficulty in doing so. Did it not happen after all? Was not that ever-present danger realized? Did not the "*governo di un solo*" come upon them at last—and that in its most detested form, the tyranny of a fellow-citizen?

It may be also, that among that Signory, of which a Guicciardini was the head, there was enough of political wisdom and insight to give them some glimpse of the truth, that in political combinations, as in other things, extremities touch each other. There may have been mis-

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givings among them, that in the circle in which human affairs move, the extremest verge of democracy lies close beside despotic autocracy—that power in the hands of an unreasoning "demos," is power ready for the hand of an unscrupulous demagogue—that the excess of their provisions against the ascendancy of an oligarchy might peradventure produce a state of things well calculated to render practicable the ambition of a despot. A.D. 1378.

So Simoncino was put to the rack; and the fourth or fifth turn of the cord brought from his lips the name—(how ominous those who heard the confession could not know!)—of . . . Salvestro de' Medici!

He named also two other ringleaders of the people, who could, he declared, confirm what he had stated. These men were, therefore, at once arrested; and having been brought to the palace, and put to torture, both severally declared that the mover and mainspring of the intended rising was Salvestro de' Medici.

The short summer night had meanwhile well-nigh worn itself away. The dawn was at hand. With its earliest light the dreaded uprising of the masses might be expected. And the immediate question was, what could be done in the short time that remained for the protection of the city? It was hurriedly decided that the Signory should remain firm at its post in the Palazzo, holding it as a fortress by the aid of their immediate attendants. The "*Otto di Guerra*," declared that they had at hand 1130 lances completely armed, and orders were sent to these to proceed instantly to the Piazza. Communications were made to all the Gonfalonieri of the Guilds, bidding them march out their members armed for the defence of the city. And this appeared to be all that it was possible to do.

The torturing of the three popular ringleaders had been done in the interior of the Palazzo with the utmost secrecy,

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A.D. 1378. within walls which no shrieks of agony could pierce. And the immediate officials of the palace were, as usual, the mere creatures of the men in power for the time being. But it so happened that there was one man in the palace, whose special functions gave him access to it at all hours, and who, nevertheless, was not subjected to the influences which made the rest of its officials *safe*. This was the clockmaker, who was charged with the regulation of the great clock in the tower. It chanced that his duties had taken him up into the tower during the hours of that night. He came and went with his own keys. Nobody had given a thought in the confusion and alarm of that night to the clockmaker up in the tower! But from some stair, or belfry rope hole, or spying point of some sort, Messer Niccoló degli Oriuole had seen the three *popolani* on the rack! And making the best of his way from the Palazzo to the Camaldoli,* in the neighbourhood of the San Frediano and San Piero in Gattolino gates, he told among the artisans and labourers gathered together there what he had seen.

"To arms! To arms!" he cried; "the Priors are slaughtering!" †

This spark falling amid the dangerous materials collected, was more than enough to cause an immediate and universal explosion. First to the church of the Carmine, close to the San Frediano gate, ran one of the rioters, and

* Camaldoli is the name of a monastery situated in the Tuscan Apennines, inhabited by Cistercian monks, and the cradle and chief place of all the Cistercian order. The use of the word in the text, as common at the present day as it was in the fourteenth century, is a curious one. It is popularly used to signify exactly what is meant by the slang phrase "slums,"—low parts of the city inhabited exclusively by the poorest classes. How the word should have come to have that signification it is hard to say, unless it be that the denizens of the "Camaldoli" of Florence, are supposed to be as poverty-stricken as monks.

† "*I Priori fan carne!*" is the horribly graphic expression recorded in Gino Capponi's account of the events of these days, *loc. cit.* p. 1114.

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rang a furious tocsin on the convent bells. In another minute the peal was returned from the belfry of the Franciscan monastery in the Borg' Ognisanti, on the other side of the Arno. In less than a quarter of an hour the bells in every quarter of Florence were making the summer dawn hideous with their clangour. And everywhere the well understood summons was obeyed. The multitudes came flocking out, mostly with arms in their hands into the streets, and began, as was ever the case when there was trouble in Florence, as though it were a law of their nature, which made all previous concert superfluous, to flow like huge turbid waves towards the Piazza. A.D. 1378.

Their first cry, as they came beneath the windows of the Palazzo Pubblico, was for the men who had been racked to be given up to them. And, though there were some among the Priors there, who were for throwing the prisoners limb by limb from the window in answer to the demand, it was decided by the majority to comply with the popular will.

In the meantime a very few only of the soldiers, who according to the statement of the Eight of War were available, had arrived on the Piazza; and they, as the turbulent and rushing crowd began to fill its area, bubbling into it from every street-mouth on all sides of it, instead of acting in any way, quietly drew on one side and remained passive lookers-on at the growing tumult. Nor had the repeated messages sent by the Signory to the Gonfalonieri of the Guilds produced any better result. Not a man of them had appeared on the Piazza. Two or three of the guilds had indeed assembled their members, and wished to obey the summons of the Priors. But the agitators who were secretly blowing the coals of the popular fury, especially Salvestro de' Medici, persuaded them to abstain from doing so.

Thus abandoned in their Palazzo, the Priors sent for



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A.D. 1378. Salvestro, and it would seem to indicate a very perfect conviction of his own strength and of the weakness of the Signory, that he chose to obey their summons. They told him what had been alleged against him by the three men who had been tortured, expressing their belief at the same time that it was of course a monstrous calumny. Indeed it was true, the Medici answered, that he had heard something of all this. Some of the malcontents had come with their complaints to him. Perhaps he ought to have mentioned the circumstance to the Signory. But really it seemed so unimportant, and any power for mischief which these obscure men could have must be so insignificant in comparison with that wielded by the Signory, that he had not thought it worth while to do so.

Manifestly false and hypocritical as all this was, the Signory, despite the opposition of one or two among its members who would have acted more vigorously, affected to believe it; and gently reprimanding the demagogue for having been remiss in his duty towards the State in this respect, requested him to mediate between them and the people, and to go out to them on the Piazza, and learn what were their demands.

Salvestro went out from the Palazzo Pubblico into the raging crowd on the Piazza accordingly; and soon afterwards there were palaces in flames in every quarter of the city.

And now, says Gino Capponi, the historian of these sad and humiliating scenes, now was the time for the paying off of old scores by private vengeance. There was nothing needed but to shout among the crowd, "Let us go to the house of such or such an one!" There were immediately hands ready for the work; and the destruction of the dwelling indicated was in a very short time accomplished.

During the whole of that day the city was entirely in the hands of the populace, and no attempt was made to

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curb or resist their violence. An immense amount of property was destroyed; but there seems to have been little bloodshed, and very little plundering. Indeed, the rioters erected a huge gallows in the midst of the Piazza, for the summary punishment of any man who should be caught attempting to plunder. A.D. 1378.

At the close of the day, a strange scene was to be witnessed in the Piazza. Fatigued with the work of destruction, and puzzled how best to put to profit the power of doing absolutely whatever it pleased them to do, the populace decided that they had friends, who deserved reward at the hands of the people, as much as their enemies deserved punishment;—and that such deserts should be recognized by the award of knighthood to be forthwith conferred by the popular majesty. So first the hero of the day, Salvestro de' Medici, was duly dubbed Cavaliere; and then Tommaso Strozzi, who, separating himself from the rest of his family had taken the popular side;—and then others.

And the sport was found to be so diverting, that King Mob cried aloud for more candidates for the honour of knighthood at his hands; nor was the fun found wearisome till seventy-four citizens had thus been made "Cavalieri," "some willingly," says Capponi, "some from fear, and some by force. For they were lifted bodily and borne off to the Piazza by the people, and there knighted whether they would or no. And a strange thing it was to see, and difficult to be believed, that men whose houses had been burned down in the morning by the rioters should now be compelled by them to be knighted! But all fell in with their humour for fear of worse!" *

The Signory seeing all this foolery, hoped that the worst was over, and that the rioters would disperse as night

* Capponi, *loc. cit.*, p. 1117.



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A.D. 1378. came on. But they did nothing of the sort. On the contrary, a body of 6000 men remained banded together the entire night, around the "*Gonfalone di Giustizia*," the great flag of the Republic, of which they had violently possessed themselves on the Tuesday, not without the connivance of Salvestro de' Medici, Tommaso Strozzi, and a few other leading citizens who were acting with them. The possession of this emblem of authority by the rioters was considered by the government to enhance the danger, as it seemed, or might be supposed by the disaffected, to impart a certain semblance of legality to the doings of those assembled beneath it.

Fresh appeals from the Signory, who remained shut up in their palace, to the Gonfalonieri of the Guilds, and to all well-disposed citizens to arm themselves and come out to the Piazza in defence of order, were as vain as their previous orders and entreaties had been. The terror in the city, and doubt as to what was coming, were too great. Not a man would move in the defence of legitimate authority; and the Signory found itself entirely abandoned. In the course of that night the Priors caused supplies of food to be brought into the Palace, and took measures for fortifying the doors and windows, fearing that they might be attacked, and declaring their determination to hold the Palace, and remain at least bodily at their post at the helm of the State to the last extremity. Information reached them in the course of the night, that it was the intention of the rioters to proceed at three in the morning to Santa Croce, for the purpose of taking possession of the strong box containing all the moneys of the government, which was kept in that convent. But two of the Priors, bolder than their colleagues, stole out of the Palazzo at two in the morning, and accompanied by a few servants made their way unobserved to Santa Croce, and brought off the chest in safety to the Palace—to the great exasperation of

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the insurgents, when they found themselves baulked of their expected prey. A.D. 1378.

The morning of Wednesday the 21st of July opened with so violent a storm of rain that "the water ran in the streets as though they had been rivers." But this sedative, which has served to extinguish so many a popular conflagration, failed to disperse the Florentine populace, or arrest the course of their proceedings. Their first step that morning was to despatch messengers to all the Gonfalonieri of the Guilds, inviting them to send their "Gonfalons" or flags, each with two representatives of the guild to which it belonged, to meet and confer with the populace —the "*popolo minuto*"—the small folks—in the church of San Bernabò, and there to swear that they would be with the people, and cast in their lot with them. It must be remembered that these leading men and representatives of the guilds to whom this invitation was sent were of the social class from which the Signory and all the governmental authorities were chosen;—that they were in all respects the fellows and equals—probably in some cases the relatives, business connections, or friends—of those unhappy impotent Priors who were shut up in the palace, and who were vainly imploring these same men of the guilds to exert themselves for the preservation of order and of the constitution. Yet, though they had been deaf to the entreaties of the men of their own class in office, they acceded at once to the above proposal of the insurgent populace.

Nothing could equal the pusillanimity or treasonable bad faith of the dominant well-to-do burgher class in Florence upon this occasion. It displayed not only a shameful lack of patriotism, but a total absence of faith in the stability of the political constitution, or in the desirability of preserving it. Most of the present generation have seen times when it would in all human probability have gone worse with London than it did in 1378 with

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A.D. 1378. Florence, if there had not been a very different spirit found at need among its citizens. And yet those same Florentines would doubtless have been ready to make sacrifices in purse or person, and stand shoulder to shoulder for the upholding of the interest or honour of Florence against a foreign foe. No man among them had any second thought or doubt about his desire that Florence should be pre-eminent in power, wealth, and renown among all the communities of Italy. But as to who among themselves should have the wielding of that power, the management of that wealth, and the personal enjoyment of that renown,—that indeed was quite another matter. It was not only a question, but an ever open and vexed question, with the side of it against maintaining the existing order of things always weighted by the consideration that any change might put those good things into the hands of the considerer, and would at all events have the desirable result of ousting those who had gained possession of them. To take away political power from anyone in the enjoyment of it, more especially from a fellow-citizen, was ever more or less agreeable to a Florentine. So the guilds* sent their representatives, two each, according to the orders of the mob, to meet the populace and to confer on the demands which they had to make on the government. The first thing the mob leaders proposed to these representatives of the class above them,—the class which stood in the relationship of employers and paymasters to most of them,—was to take a solemn oath to side with them in their present contest. And the representatives of the corporations of the trades docilely obeyed. That done, the leaders of the mob announced their intention of taking forcible possession of the Palace of the Podestà. And their new allies of the class, whose houses they were

* With the exception of the great guild of the wool manufacturers. Mecatti, Storia della Città di Firenze, vol. i. p. 278.

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burning on the previous day, consented to march with them on that errand. A.D. 1378.

The Podestà sent in all haste to the Signory, shut up in their palace, for troops to protect him. The Priors made application to the Eight of War for a force for that purpose. The Eight replied that they had no troops available, the standing forces of the Republic being engaged in fighting against the Count Francesco di Davadola, a small feudal noble who had a stronghold in the mountains to the southward of the Mugello. This was the truth. Nevertheless, it transpired that there *were* a few soldiers in the city; but these "Saints," the Eight, had divided them among themselves for the protection of their own houses. The Signory sent messengers to call these forces from that employment with all haste, and march them to the defence of the Podestà;—which was done. And the soldiers did hurry to the Podestà's palace,—to find that, having held out as long as he could, he had just surrendered it to the mob.

Being in possession of this seat of authority, and countenanced by the presence of the Gonfalons of the Guilds, the popular leaders thought that they were in a position to treat with the government. So they sent a messenger to the Palazzo, desiring that a deputation of the Signory might be sent to them. And the government at once acceded to the demand.

In a very short time the deputation returned to the Palazzo Pubblico, together with a number of deputies from the populace, carrying to the Signory the list of terms which had been drawn up.

In the first place, a great number of the smaller trades, several of them hitherto dependent, as has been explained, on the great guild of clothiers—the "*Arte della Lana*"—demanded to be formed into independent corporations of their own, with Gonfalonieri, and equal rights to a parti-

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A.D. 1378. cipation in all the offices of the state. This was in fact the gist of the revolution which was desired;—and the change involved nothing less than a revolution, for it went far towards throwing all the power of the State into the hands of the lowest orders of the inhabitants.

The other demands are mainly interesting as showing the state and tendencies of the popular mind. No more interest was to be paid on the public debt; but the principal was to be repaid in twelve years. All those who had been admonished were to be at once restored to their rights and franchises, and those who had been exiled to be recalled. Punishment should no longer be inflicted on life or limb, but only by fine. No one of the "*popolo minuto*" should be sued for a debt under fifty florins for the next two years. There should be a most ample amnesty for all that had been done during the insurrection, with heavy pains and penalties against any magistrate who should listen to any complaint arising out of any such act. The rent of the stalls in the Mercato Vecchio should also be diminished.

The rest of the demands, amounting to a great number, were for various rewards and punishments to be distributed to a number of individual citizens who had become objects of the popular favour or hatred. Messer Salvestro de' Medici was to have assigned him all the rents of the shops on the Ponte Vecchio, amounting to over 600 florins, "for the maintenance of the dignity of Cavaliere bestowed on him by the people." Several "*grandi*" were to be made "*popolani*" for their good deserts, and several "*popolani*" declared to be "*grandi*" for their demerits. A certain number of the most noted and most obnoxious aristocrats were to be exiled.

This list of demands was carried in a tumultuous manner to the Palazzo Pubblico, and the Signory, "dazed as they were with the noise which filled the whole vault of the sky,

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and worn out by the extreme heat," * could do nothing but put them in a hurried manner to the vote, and declare them duly carried with all speed. Thereupon the populace promised that all tumult should at once cease in the city, that every man should go to his home, and put away his arms. A little incident which occurred about nightfall on that Wednesday shows very abundantly the consciousness which both parties had of the completeness of the popular victory. News reached the city, just as the gates were being shut, that troops were on their march from Pistoia and the country between that city and Lucca, for the support of the authorities, and that they were then only ten miles off at Poggio a Caiano. Whereupon the leaders of the mob sent a messenger to the Signory to tell them that if they did not instantly send and countermand the soldiers, they would burn the palace and them in it, and the entire city. And the Signory forthwith did as they were bid—with what effect they were not long in discovering. A.D. 1378.

On the Thursday morning, the 22nd of July, a great council and all the magistracies were assembled for the ratification in due form of the new statutes and provisions made on the previous day in compliance with the popular will. And no opposition whatever was offered to them from any quarter. On the contrary, they were declared to be all passed and fully enacted. But the populace, which had filled the court of the palace and the Piazza during the short time it had needed to accomplish this, either having exhausted their small stock of patience, or, as is probable, instigated by the demagogues, who were secretly pulling the wires by which the popular mass was moved, sent Tommaso Strozzi into the council hall to declare that the people would not have any Signoria at

* Capponi, *loc. cit.*, p. 1121.

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A.D. 1378. all for the future; and that the Gonfaloniere and Priors should leave the palace forthwith, and go home to their own houses. The "Eight of War" alone,—the *Santi*, who throughout the whole of the recent war had been the favourites of the people,—might remain, and the palace should be delivered up into their hands.

This abandonment of the Palazzo Pubblico by the "*Signoria*" seemed far worse than all that had gone before. It was to a Florentine imagination the end of all things. Every form and symbol of law and order was at an end. The majesty of the Commonwealth was humbled in the dust. At this unexpected demand, the Signory "looked blankly in each other's faces, not knowing what course to take." They determined to lay the matter before the members of the various boards who were then in the palace, and to demand what they chose should be done. This was already an act of unpardonable weakness, and even of abdication. It was rather for the other magistracies to look to the Signory to be told what should be done.

The magistrates thus applied to "wept; some wrung their hands, some beat their faces; all, utterly confounded, knew not what to do!"*

While they were thus seeking counsel, where counsel was none, another demand was brought up from the mob, that two of their own body should come up and sit with the Signory to share their deliberations. The unhappy Priors jumped at the proposal. By all means! they replied. Let any two, whom it pleased the people to name, come up and talk with them quietly about the necessities of the state. Ay; as long as talking quietly could be made the order of the day, the Priors might hope to hold their own!

But it was a vain hope. Before the answer could be

* Capponi, *loc. cit.*, p. 1122.

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brought to them, the fickle popular mind had veered round again to their previous humour. There should be no Signory! If the Gonfaloniere and the Priors did not leave the palace on the instant, they would burn the palace;—they would burn and plunder the entire city;—they would bring there the wives and children of the Signori, and butcher them before their eyes! The Gonfaloniere and Priors besought Tommaso Strozzi and Benedetto Alberti,—he who had first called to the people from the window of the palace when Salvestro de' Medici's proposal was refused by the Signory in the previous month—to mediate between them and the mob. These two citizens, together with Salvestro de' Medici, were the principal movers of the sedition, and were in all probability the immediate authors and instigators of the demand that the Signory should leave the palace. It may be supposed that nothing was gained by their mediation, though an entire hour passed while they were pretending to endeavour to induce the populace to hear reason. At last they came up once more into the council hall, saying that it was absolutely impossible to move the people from their demand. So it was decided among the weeping magistrates that they should go each one to his own home, "lest worse should come of it, both to themselves and to the city."* A.D. 1378.

But Alamanno Acciajuoli and Niccolò del Nero, two of the Priors, said that he might go who would;—they for their part did not intend to quit the palace, come what come might. "The Gonfaloniere, a miserably poor creature, and a coward, was weeping for his wife and his children. And the rest were standing like dead corpses; and no man had a word of counsel to offer. And many of the citizens who were in the court below came up, and some of the magistrates gathered around the Priors urging them and per-

* Capponi, *ibid.*

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A.D. 1378. suading them to go; saying, 'For God's sake, be off with you, or not a man of you will be left alive!'"*

All the attendants and the servants of the palace, even to the mace-bearer and the porter, had by this time gone; "so that the Signory was absolutely and entirely deserted. And a considerable number of the mob had already entered into the palace, all well armed, with Niccolò Carlone at their head. The Signori wandered one hither, and one thither; one up, and one down, and did not know what to do! The Gonfaloniere, like a worthless poor creature as he was, slunk away from his colleagues secretly, and went to Messer Tommaso Strozzi, and implored him to save him. And Messer Tommaso took him to his own house." The two Priors who had declared their intention of remaining at their post in the Palace, at all hazards, "coming out from their rooms"—(it is to be understood that the members of the Signory for the time being resided altogether in the Palazzo Pubblico, during the two months of their term of office, leaving their families in their private houses;)—saw no one of their colleagues, and on asking, were told that they had all gone to their homes. Then they gave up all for lost; and seeing that in fact all the others had gone away to their own houses, they went down the stairs, and gave up the keys of the palace gates to the Provost† of the Guilds,—his name was Calcagnino, a tavern-keeper,—and went both of them to their own homes. * * * * And thus was destroyed, as one may say, the noble, prosperous, and tranquil government of this flourishing city. As soon as the Signori were gone, the gates of the palace were thrown open, and the populace rushed in; and one called Michele di Lando, a wool-comber, or a foreman in a shop

* Capponi, *loc. cit.*, p. 1125.

† The writer evidently does not mean any regularly constituted officer, but the man whom those representatives of the guilds who had joined the mob, as above related, put forward as their foreman.

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of wool-combers and carders, had in his hand the Gonfalon which the people had taken from the house of the Esecutore di Giustizia (as was related above), and he was bare-legged, in shoes, but without stockings. With this flag in his hand he entered the palace at the head of the populace, and proceeded straight to the audience chamber of the Signory; and there he stopped, standing up. And the populace by acclamation gave him the Signory, and declared their will that he should be Gonfaloniere and Lord of Florence. And then he made certain decrees, and published them to the people; he made Syndics of the Guilds whomsoever he thought fit, and gave them the charge of restoring order in the city. And so things remained all that day and part of the next; so that it may be said that this Michele Lando, the wool-comber, was for more than twenty-eight hours absolute Lord of Florence! And this was the result of our civil contentions and changes. Oh, merciful God, how wonderful and great a miracle hast thou manifested to us!"* A.D. 1378.

Michele Lando however made no attempt to remain absolute Lord of Florence. He at once proceeded to cause the people to elect a Signory of Priors, with himself as Gonfaloniere, by the usual constitutional means of ballot. Nor did he or his fellows even attempt to retain the whole of the offices in their own hands. They elected, on the contrary, nine Priors, three from the "*Arti Maggiori*," three from the "*Arti Minori*," and three from among themselves, the "*popolo minuto*," who had hitherto had no part in the government of the Commonwealth.

And Michele Lando the wool-comber, and the officers of his appointment, did restore order, and in a certain measure the reign of legality, once more to Florence.

And so ended the first act of the memorable "*Tumulto*

* Capponi, *loc. cit.*, p. 1125.

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A.D. 1378. *dei Ciompi.*"* The story of it has been related with a greater degree of detail than the necessities of time and space will allow to most other portions of this Florentine history, because Florentines still look back to it as one of the most notable and memorable passages of the history of the Commonwealth; and Florentine historians consider it as a leading landmark and epoch in the course of their narratives. They are apt to regard it as a primary cause of that tendency towards social dissolution which may, it is true, be more readily discerned at its work after than before this period, and which prepared the way for the final extinction of constitutional liberty. So are people apt to attribute to the sudden appearance of some acute disease many a death, the cause of which should have been sought in more permanently-present and deeply-lying faults of physical constitution. This Ciompi outbreak is not more immediately or closely connected in the character of a cause, with what came after it, than it is in the character of a consequence with what went before it. It closes an epoch as appropriately as it may be made to commence one; though the Italian historians prefer to consider it in the latter point of view. Florence was never again after the "*Tumulto dei Ciompi*," we are told, the city it was before that sharp fever fit. No, truly, it was not. And as much may be said of any individual, city, or nation, with respect to any given point in the course of its existence.

* The word "Ciompi," meaning the lowest classes of the people, and not now known, except in connection with this part of Florentine history, is thought to have been a corruption of the French word *Compère*, by which the French soldiers of the Duke of Athens used to address the men of the labouring classes with whom they used to associate.

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## CHAPTER III.

Injustice to Michele Lando—His measures for the government of the city—Tumultuary enactment of laws by the populace—Election of the new Signory for August—Delegates of the people at Santa Maria Novella—Revolutionary appointment of the new Signory—The guilds submit to the will of the popular leaders at Santa Maria Novella—Michele Lando alone makes a stand against the popular licence, and once again restores order in the city—Popular cry raised by the Signory against the rioters—The irregularly elected Signory deposed from office—All the alterations in the constitution decreed by the populace annulled—Two of the ringleaders beheaded—Confirmation of the knighthood conferred by the people—The real causes of the popular discontent—Progress of political struggles between the time of the Ciompi riots and the ascendancy of the Medici—The new character of these struggles—Conspiracy to overturn the government at the close of 1478—Another at the following Easter—Partiality of the government—A third conspiracy in the autumn of the same year—Dangers arising from the "fuorusciti"—Plot of Gianozzo Sacchetti—Carlo da Durazzo intrigues with Florentine exiles—Mysterious letter from Giovanni Aguto—Guccio Gucci sent to treat with him—Execution of Donato Barbadori—Discontent against the oligarchical party in power again running high—The Capitano compelled by the people to execute two aristocratic conspirators—Tumultuous assemblage of the populace around the palace of the Capitano del Popolo—Remarkable conduct and death of Piero degli Albizzi—Demagogue leaders of the people—The current of popular feeling begins to turn against them—Their imprudent persistence in their persecution of their adversaries—Jacopo Schiatesi—Revulsion of popular feeling—Ruin of the demagogues—Restoration of the aristocracy to power—Exile of Michele Lando.

It is hardly fair in Messer Gino Capponi to conclude his remarkable chronicle of the Ciompi tumult, from which the above account has been mainly taken, as he has done. He groans with upcast eyes and hands over the fearful dispensation which so miraculously installed Michele Lando,

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A.D. 1378. the wool-comber, in the Palazzo Pubblico, as absolute master of Florence. And there he breaks off. But Michele Lando deserved something more than this. It was wholly due to his good sense, energy, patriotism, and courage, that the city was not abandoned to utter anarchy and destruction. Nor was it by any means an easy task to undertake. Licence to the uneducated masses of a city population is as the taste of blood to a tiger. The concession of all they asked might appease them for the moment, as it may a fretful child. But the wild licence of the hours when all law was in abeyance, the excitement of burning down houses, and feeling themselves to be the arbiters of the fate of those who had so long been their masters, the pleasure of playing at magistrates and legislators,—all this was not likely to make the return to monotonous every-day labour agreeable.

The people made Priors, and Counsellors of the Wards, and Gonfalonieri of the Guilds, as Lando bade them; and hurrahed, and shouted, and went that night to their beds contented. But very soon they craved for more of the same amusement. One day towards the end of August, a great crowd came into the Piazza bringing a notary with them, and a scrivener, for the purpose, they said, of enacting such laws as they deemed to be for the good of the State. Their secretary was one Gaspar di Ricco, who kept a child's school in Via Ghibellina; and the scene that ensued, as described by Coppo Stefani, must have been a singular one. The radical schoolmaster, with his writing tackle, was installed in the place in front of the palace from which the Priors were wont to harangue the people, and then the process of legislation began in this fashion. "'Hi! Gaspar! write; I'll make a law' . . . for such or such a purpose . . . (that pint pots should hold a pint and a half, perhaps, or some such desirable provision). 'And, Gaspar,' another would say, coming up on the other side

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of him, 'write this law that I make.' And a third would hold a dagger at his throat, and tear up what had been written, and put a fresh sheet of paper into his hand, and cry, 'Now write as I bid you, Gaspar, the law shall be' . . . so and so. And another would lean over, and rub his finger across the words written, crying, 'No! it ought to stand thus!' And the noise, and the confusion of voices made the Piazza seem a very hell. They made a law, among others, that for so many years to come no man should be called on to pay his debts. And all these things would have been entered on the statute books as duly passed, if it had not been that Messer Viviano, the notary, persuaded them that all would be null and void, if the new laws were entered when the council was not sitting; and promised that if they would go quietly to their homes, he would see all their enactments duly entered in the statute books in the proper formal manner." * A.D. 1378.

On the following day, the 29th of August, it was necessary to ballot in the usual way for the new Signory for the ensuing two months, Michele Lando and his colleagues having been appointed only for the remainder of the term during which the Signory, turned out of the palace by the Ciompi, ought, in regular course, to have remained in office. There was great reason to fear that the election of the new magistrates would not be accomplished without fresh violence and disorders. But on the morning of that day, a large number of the leaders of the populace, instead of thronging the great piazza in front of the Palazzo Pubblico, as usual, betook themselves to Santa Maria Novella, and there elected a "*balia*," or board of eight, among themselves, two from each of the quarters of the city, to which they added sixteen "councillors." Having thus far successfully aped the proceedings of their superiors, they

* Coppo Stefani, lib. x. rubr. dccc.



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A.D. 1378. sent messengers to all the guilds, desiring that two representatives should be sent by each of those bodies, to confer with them on the steps necessary to be taken for the good government of the city.

The guilds thought it best to comply with this demand, and sent each of them two of their members accordingly. But these deputies finding that no counsel was asked of them, but that they were summoned only to hear the commands of the populace, told "the Eight" that they might execute their own will as they pleased, and returned to the guilds which had sent them, fully expecting another day of burning and plundering. But just then was heard the great bell of the Palazzo Pubblico sounding for the election of the new Signory. And the populace with their Eight at their head, abandoning, with the usual fickleness of a mob, their scheme of ruling the city themselves, rushed away from Santa Maria Novella to the Piazza, crying that they must superintend the drawing and election of the new Signory.

And then a Signory was appointed after a fashion never before seen in Florence. For the Priors, who were about to quit office, and whose duty it was to superintend the election of their successors, thoroughly intimidated by the aspect and temper of the people, docilely did whatever the crowd on the Piazza commanded them. Name after name as it came from the balloting-urn was proposed to the people, and then there arose a storm of cries, "No! no! we won't have him! Tear it up! Tear it up!" Or, "Good! good! he'll do!" Many a name was rejected by the Eight, who took it upon themselves to represent the people, because some single voice of some one in the crowd cried out against the proposal. And thus the whole day was consumed before a list of Priors for the months of September and October could be completed.* The scene

* Coppo Stefani, lib. iv. rubr. dxxxiii.; Ammirato, lib. xiv. Gonf. 520.

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in the Piazza that day was bitterly felt by many a grave citizen to be one of indelible disgrace to the city; but the majority of those who had shops to be plundered, or houses to be burned, considered that the populace might have spent the day worse than in screaming themselves hoarse in the Piazza. A.D. 1378.

After this exploit the popular Eight returned to Santa Maria Novella, where the chapel, built in the second cloister by Messer Agnolo degli Acciajuoli, when he was bishop of Florence, in the year 1343, had been assigned to them by the friars for their accommodation;* and those who were first there the next morning, almost before it was daylight, sent again to the guilds to demand that representatives should be sent to confer with them. Again members from the corporations waited on the popular majesty as ordered, and were sent back by the Eight, who said that they wanted to confer with the newly-appointed Consuls of the Guilds. These were not yet appointed. The populace replied that the guilds must appoint them instantly, and send them to Santa Maria Novella, for that such was the will of the people. Again the guilds docilely obeyed;—chose their consuls in a hurry, and sent them to the Eight as ordered. But the popular mind had already changed, and they were sent back again with the remark, that the people would be very well able to provide for everything necessary for the good government of the city without them.

Thereupon they,—the Eight, and the mob at their heels,—again proceeded to the Palazzo Pubblico, having with them a long list of proposed laws. Arrived at the palace, they caused the members of the Signory about to quit office, and those about to enter on it, in accordance with the tumultuous elections of the previous day, to meet together, and then compelled them all to swear that a

* Coppo Stefani, lib. x. rubr. decci.



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A.D. 1378. parliament should be called on the first of September, and that all the projects of laws which they had prepared, should be passed. And the cowed and intimidated Priors swore as they were required to do.

But there was one man among them whose feelings bitterly revolted against the humiliating part which he was called on to play; who felt that he had been placed there to rule, and not to be ruled by the mob; and who had courage enough to determine, that as far as in him lay he would do so. This one man was Michele Lando, the bare-legged woolcomber, who, as Gonfaloniere of the out-going Signory, remained chief magistrate of the Commonwealth till the night of the thirty-first of August. This man, who had risen from the ranks of labour to be a foreman in the shop of Messer Alessandro di Niccolaio, and whose mother and wife were then keeping a green-grocer's stall,* had the sense to know, that the course which the populace were then pursuing could lead only to anarchy, and not to any of the reforms which were really needed; and determined that, at all costs, disorder and illegality should be repressed.

During that night of the 29th, he concerted with the Gonfalonieri of the Guilds, that they should quietly arm their members, and be ready to march to the Piazza at the sound of the bell the next morning. He contrived also to procure from the country a considerable number of armed men, and got them quietly into the city. To Messer Giorgio Scali, a member of the wealthy merchant class, who had been one of those who had sided with the people in the July insurrection, he confided the guard of the Palazzo Pubblico. And when all these dispositions were completed on the morning of the 30th, he had the great bell rung to summon the guilds and the people to the Piazza. Of course the Eight from Santa Maria Novella

* Coppo Stefani, lib. x. rubr. dcexevi.

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came with the rabble-rout of their followers at their heels, and entered into the palace as if they were the lords paramount of the republic. And just then a chance circumstance occurred which precipitated the catastrophe at which Lando was well determined to arrive in some way. A.D. 1378.

Two new guilds, the tailors and dyers, joined together with various other small trades, according to most of the historians, but according to Coppo Stefani, who relates all these events as an eye-witness, and is perhaps the best authority, three new guilds intended to comprise at all events, whether two or three, all the lower orders of the people, had been added to the previously existing and regularly constituted seven "*Arti Maggiori*," and fourteen "*Arti Minori*," at the time of the July rising. Now it so happened, that the Gonfaloniere and men of the silkmercer's guild, and the ragged regiment of one of the new popular guilds, both coming to the Piazza somewhat later than the others, which had already assembled there, fell in with each other on their way, and from an exchange of insulting words, soon came to blows. Of course either side was promptly reinforced by its friends and adherents, and a formidable riot commenced, in which the populace were worsted and put to flight, and some of their men killed.

While this was going on in the streets, the Eight ringleaders of the mob, who were in the palace, aware that there was fighting in the streets, but ignorant of the results of it, began arrogantly to call the Priors to account for their inefficiency in not being able to prevent broils and bloodshed in the streets;—as if, says Ammirato, they themselves were not the cause of all tumult and confusion. Upon this Lando, to their no small astonishment and indignation, bade them leave the palace instantly; and on their refusing to obey him, drew his sword and rushing on them drove them before him down the great

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A.D. 1378. stairs, and so across the interior court of the palace to the doors, where they were by his order arrested by the soldiers under Giorgio Scali. Then taking the Gonfalone di Giustizia, and calling on the Priors and all the Gonfalonieri and other officers of the Guilds to follow him, he marched thus through the entire city, calling on all good citizens to rally to the cause of order, and put down the traitors, who were plotting to deliver the city into the hands of a stranger.

There is not the least ground for believing that the populace had any such notion in their heads, or any notion at all except that playing at magistrates and statesmen was far pleasanter than combing or dyeing wool. But it so happened that a certain Bartolommeo di Sanseverino had arrived in Florence for the purpose of obtaining from the government employment in their army; —asking for a General's commission, in a word;—an ordinary circumstance enough. For the poor feudal nobles, who knew no trade save that of arms, were always ready during those fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, to do the fighting of the rich commercial cities for them, and were constantly seeking for employment and pay in their service. But the fact of this stranger's presence in Florence was sufficient to obtain a considerable amount of credence for the cry got up by the Gonfaloniere. It struck the constantly vibrating chord of every Florentine's special dread; and served on this as on more than one other occasion, as a bugbear to frighten the citizens into the path which it was wished that they should pursue.

It was in the present instance sufficient for those who were anxious to put down the insurgent people to pretend to believe in the existence of such a design. The cry became so general, that poor Messer Bartolommeo Sanseverino was obliged to escape from the city in all haste, and take refuge in Pisa. And some of his servants who

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were not quite quick enough in escaping with him, were arrested and kept in prison for several days. So powerful an engine in Florence was the cry of danger to the city from usurpation. A.D. 1378.

So "Death to the traitors, who are going to deliver up Florence to a tyrant!" ran from mouth to mouth through the city. And many a quiet citizen, not high enough on the social ladder to have any special interest in restoring to power the party which had recently lost it, and not low enough to be out in the streets among the Ciompi, doubtless believed the charge in all good faith, and hurried to join those who were clamorous against the evil which every Florentine always considered the worst of all that could befall him. The poor Ciompi were powerless to resist the attack thus made on them. One attempt they made, as they were driven before the wool-comber Gonfaloniere and the rapidly-increasing band of the order-loving citizens who accompanied him, before giving up the game as lost, and getting them away to their workshops. Driven from the streets they flowed back again to the Piazza, so that when the Gonfaloniere returned to the Palace from his triumphant progress, he found the mouths of most of the streets opening on that central heart of Florence blocked and guarded by the Ciompi.

Perceiving therefore, as he attempted to reach the Palace, that his old friends and comrades were still disposed to give trouble, he turned at once, on horseback as he was, and charged the closely-packed crowd, calling on those behind him to imitate his example. The crowd broke and fled at once; and before nightfall, the great Gonfalon of the Republic had been carried in peaceful triumph as a symbol of the restored supremacy of law and order through every quarter of the city, including the Camaldoli especially inhabited by the Ciompi.*

* Ammirato, lib. xiv. Gonf. 520.

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A.D. 1378. Lando, returning from his victorious progress to the Palazzo, occupied the remaining hours of that last day of his tenure of office in taking steps to secure the safety and tranquillity of Florence during the coming night; and on the following morning, the first of September, handed over the city peacefully and quietly to his successors. These successors, however, were unhappily the Gonfalonieri and Priors, whose election was conducted in the illegal and turbulent manner described a few pages back, in compliance with the dictates of a crowd of *Ciompi*. One Jacopo Baraccio,—he, too, like his predecessor Lando, a wool-comber,—was the new Gonfaloniere, and the Priors his colleagues were all men of a similar class.

The first thing which the new Signory did was the wisest they could do, poor men! They called together to the Palace all the ruling bodies of the different guilds, and the members of the various boards of magistrates, to form a parliament for the consideration of the best means of restoring and settling the constitution and government of the city. "But," says Ammirato, "there was nothing more pressing for remedy than the present unbecoming and disgraceful appearance of the city with a wool-comber at its head. For the very Ciompi themselves could not endure to see a fellow whom they had all known carrying wool the day before, and who must return to the same occupation as soon as the time of his magistracy should come to an end, dressed up in the senatorial robes of office with mace-bearers and runners going before him." *

The first thing, therefore, done by the assembly was to decree the deposition of poor Jacopo and several of his colleagues, and appoint others in their places. It was then ruled that no man of the populace,—that is, no man who did not belong to one of the twenty-one regularly constituted

* Ammirato, lib. xiv. Gonf. 521.

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guilds,—should be eligible to any of the offices of the State. Michele Lando, however, and three other men of the people, who had deserved well of the city, were specially made eligible to the offices of the Commonwealth. The two or three new guilds, which had been created to embrace the lowest orders of the people, with the intention of putting them on an equality with their richer fellow-citizens, as regarded participation in the government, were allowed indeed to exist for a short time,* but without any substantial power. All the ordinances and provisions, which had been made during the past July and August,—or almost all of them,—were annulled. And two of the eight ringleaders of the rioters who had established themselves at Santa Maria Novella, and whom Lando had wounded when driving them before him out of the Palace, were beheaded in the middle of the Piazza. Before their execution they confessed themselves guilty of sedition and treason, and implicated thirty-six others,—among them all the six others of their colleagues of the Santa Maria Novella Eight. But there were no more executions; for no one of the accused was in the hands of the government. They were condemned, therefore, as contumacious, and sentenced to banishment. A.D. 1378.

It was further decreed that all those who had been knighted by the Ciompi, and who wished for knighthood, should appear before the government, and receive it in a regular manner at the hands of a noble knight, and by the authority of the Commonwealth of Florence. On the day appointed for this solemnity, which was the 18th of the ensuing October, twenty-eight of the seventy-four who had been knighted by the Ciompi, in the manner that has been described, appeared personally, and three by proxy. Among those who thus wished to retain their

* They were abolished in 1382.

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A.D. 1378. Ciompi honours, we find two Medici, Salvestro and Vieri, and several others belonging to families which were, or which shortly afterwards became, leading and well-known names in Florence;—a Bardi, a Strozzi, an Alberti, a Rucellai, a Salviati, an Altoviti, an Aldobrandini, a Rinuccini, &c. It is hardly to be supposed that these men were desirous of retaining the grotesque distinction which had been bestowed upon them by the dregs of the people, and which perpetuated the memory of days of which Florence was heartily ashamed, as soon as they were over, and has been ashamed of ever since, for any other reason than either the desire of recommending themselves to the democracy which they discovered to be a rising power in the State, or the fear of being marked as having offended the popular majesty, in case it should become again rampant.

The thirty-one citizens who thus came forward were accordingly duly knighted, taking the usual oath required from those who received that grade from the burgher community;—that they would be faithful and devoted friends to the Florentine commerce and people, and its liberties, and to "the most Catholic and most Christian Guelph Party;"—and at every need be ready to the utmost of their power to defend the city, and its free and popular government. Then the Gonfaloniere gave to each of the new knights a lance and pennon and an escutcheon with the arms of the Community, and after they had paraded the city with much pomp, invited them all to a grand banquet.*

And then the city had a few months of quiet. But the whole body of the Commonwealth was in too restless and ill-satisfied a condition for long repose to be possible for it. The old Roman recipe for keeping the people quiet and submissive under the yoke of their rulers—the "panem

* Ammirato, lib. xiv. Gonf. 522.

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et circenses" is often quoted; and it is, not without a sneer, asserted or insinuated that a full-fed and tolerably amused people will not give trouble on the score of their political liberties. There may be races of people of whom this may be true; but it was not true of the Florentines of this early period, whatever may have been the case in a subsequent generation. It was no want either of bread or of any form of "circenses," that was causing them to give all the trouble they did to the classes above them in the social scale. Florence was in the enjoyment in those days of great and increasing material prosperity. Everybody was becoming richer. There was no lack of work, or of wages. Nor does there seem to have been any tendency among the working classes to complain or feel discontented that those above them were richer than they. There is no symptom of the presence in the popular mind of any communistic or socialistic doctrine or sentiment. What the lower classes wished to share with those of the upper was not their wealth but their political power. It was an admitted fact and recognized theory in the community that the government of the Commonwealth, and the honours and advantages of being entrusted with the administration of it, were vested in the hands of the people —"*popolo.*" And the malcontents wished to be recognized as "*popolo,*" and to be no longer treated as pariahs. But "*popolo*" had already come to be a word signifying a sort of nobility, a name usurped and kept for its own use by a privileged class. Other excluding and disqualifying names had been invented for them, the lowest and broadest stratum of the social pyramid. They were "*popolo minuto,*" "*popolaccio,*" "*plebe,*" "*plebaglia.*" They aspired to be "*popolo.*" In other communities discontent and insurrection have generally arisen from and justified themselves by the oppression and misgovernment of the governing classes. The multitude of the people have asked

A.D. 1378.

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A.D. 1378. only to be ruled with a tolerable amount of justice and wisdom. Nothing of the sort was the case in Florence. Rarely were any complaints heard in that period of the life of the Community, on account of evil government, though cause enough for sad complaint was not wanting. The lowest classes of the body social did not say to their rulers of the class immediately above them: "You govern us amiss!" They said, "Why should you govern us, and not we you? This business of governing, evidently so agreeable and desirable, is the common birthright of the whole of us. We want our share of it!" Still and ever, as was remarked in an earlier chapter of this history, the question in Florence was not, "How shall the Commonwealth be governed?" but, "Who shall have the governing of it?" And the prizes thus coveted by the artisans and labouring men of the factories, the forges, the tan-yards, and the dyeing-houses were not, it is to be remembered, far off from them, separated from them by the whole length of the intervening social scale. They were close to them, only just out of their reach; tantalizingly hanging before their eyes just on the outside of an artificial boundary line. Why should the line, they asked themselves, be fixed just *there*?

Was it possible that so odious a line of demarcation—a line which, in fact, made all on one side of it citizens, and all on the other helots—should be maintained for a long period just *there*,—there of all points in the pyramidical social fabric? Far more possible would it have been to maintain such a line considerably higher up in the edifice. Far easier to have guarded and held good a shorter line struck across the upper portions of the pyramid, and dividing off the apex portion of it from all the bulk below it. The dividing line drawn across the base, and shutting off only the lowest tier of the building was too long a one to be defended, and in too close vicinity to the most

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formidable and most numerous body of those to be kept out by it. A.D. 1378.

It was not possible that such a line should be long maintained. The period, accordingly, which elapsed between the Ciompi outbreak and the palpable beginning of the Medicean ascendancy, which gradually prepared for the catastrophe of the end, is marked by a series of struggles, distinguished from those which agitated the earlier portion of the Florentine story by this characteristic —that they were carried on upon false pretences and for objects wholly different from those put forward and avowed. For masses of uneducated men cannot act for and by themselves. Even rioters must have their captain. The veriest mob must have its ringleaders, even if they be marked out for pre-eminence merely by superiority of stature. These poor struggling, heaving Ciompi constituted a force; but a force needing some hand to wield it. And cunning hands, with cunning heads to them, were not lacking to offer themselves for that work. But of all the self-denying virtues ever seen in this world, perhaps the rarest of appearance is that of a demagogue, who aims really and solely at that which he professes to be his object. Assuredly the Ciompi in their struggles for political "emancipation" found none such. No sooner had they given symptoms of containing in themselves an element of force capable of being used for political purposes, than there were candidates for the using of it;—friends of the people—popular leaders, whose aim was to make the newly found force merely a lever for their own elevation. The old struggles between the different political parties, and between different social classes in Florence, had raged between adversaries, who really wanted what they said they wanted, fought for it avowedly, and undisguisedly seized it when they were victorious. Henceforward we shall see struggles carried on under false pretences, ends

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A.D. 1379. covertly and insidiously approached, and an element of insincerity and false seeming imported into the arena of Florentine politics, which has not hitherto characterized it.

Before the end of the year a conspiracy was discovered, which was to have been put in execution the night before Christmas-day. The object was to seize the gates, and the Palace, get possession of the city, and "change the government according to their pleasure;" * that is, to turn out those who were in power, and put in the conspirators and their friends. Coppo Stefani gives the names of sixty-six citizens,† who were condemned, a few to death, and the majority to exile and heavy fines. From the names given, among whom there is a Medici—not Salvestro—it would seem that this was a plot got up by certain among the "*Grandi*," availing themselves of the discontent of the recently repressed populace.

Another attempt of the same sort was discovered a little before Easter in the following year. The plan was to slaughter indiscriminately all who should be in the churches on the morning of Good Friday, on which day the services began before daylight,‡ and then amid the confusion thus occasioned to obtain possession of the city. The principal author of this atrocious plan was a priest, Pagano Strozzi, who was Prior of San Lorenzo. The signal for the rising was to have been the lighting of a fire on the top of the tower of St. Lorenzo, which was to have been answered and repeated by other fires on the towers of St. Ambrose, St. Georgio, Santo Spirito, and Santa Maria Novella;—an arrangement which seems to indicate that the clergy were extensively implicated in this conspiracy. It was however of the same nature, and proceeding from the same parties, as that which had been detected a few months before. It is said that the present scheme was only discovered by the

* Ammirato, lib. xiv. Gonf. 523. † Book x. rubr. dcccx.
‡ Coppo Stefani, lib. x. rubr. dcccxiv.

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indiscreet talk of a young priest to whom Strozzi the Prior had entrusted the task of lighting the signal fire on the top of the San Lorenzo tower. Seven citizens were beheaded on this occasion, and seventeen others condemned as contumacious. Strozzi was among the latter, to the great and just indignation of the citizens, who maintained that the Podestà Conte Galbrelli of Gubbio might have laid hands on the Prior if he had wished to do so, and accused him of showing all his severity against the small, and all his weak indulgence to the great. A.D. 1379.

It was the more difficult, however, to condemn Strozzi to capital punishment, because Marco Strozzi, his kinsman, was one of the Signory at the time. It seems hardly to have been expected that a member of the government should draw down on himself the indignation of every member and connection of his family, by permitting it to be disgraced by the execution of one of the race during his term of power.* It is curious to observe that the feeling which would have pained the family, was not so much that one of them should die by the hand of the executioner, but that a Strozzi, being in office, should have so little influence or power as not to have been able to prevent such a catastrophe. So Pagano Strozzi, the Prior, escaped with exile, while the poor men, who had been led by him into attempting this abominable scheme, atoned for it with their lives.

In the autumn of the same year another conspiracy was detected, which seems to have been plotted by some of the exiles who had been driven from the city in the late disturbances.

Throughout the whole course of Florentine history the troubles and evils arising from the same source—the exiles of the Commonwealth—were unceasing. It seems extra-

* Ammirato, lib. xiv. Gonf. 525.

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A.D. 1379. ordinary that the Florentines should not have learned from bitter experience the ill policy of filling the cities of Italy with exiled citizens—"*fuorusciti*"—who were unfailingly converted into dangerous enemies to the State by their banishment, and whose whole lives and minds were sure to be dedicated to schemes of every sort for upsetting the existing government of their native city, in such sort as to give them an opportunity of returning. To make the evil yet more sure, this recall of the exiles always was one of the results of a change of the party in power in Florence. To band themselves together, therefore, to hatch schemes with the malcontents of the cities in which they resided, with foreign potentates, with desperadoes and adventurers of any and all sorts, all with the view of stirring up civil strife at home, was the sure and perpetual occupation of the lives of the "*fuorusciti.*" And all the rulers of the city, of whatsoever party, were at all times fully aware of the continual presence and greatness of this danger,—were constantly tormented by it, and always exercised the most unceasing vigilance in providing against it. Yet it does not seem ever from first to last to have occurred to them to avoid it by abstaining from constantly creating a large and numerous class of exiles! Even if it was necessary to accept as a certain fact, that every party worsted in the strife of parties, was *ipso facto* converted into a band of seditious conspirers against the government, it was very certain that they would have been less dangerous at home, living under the eyes of their fellow-citizens and of the laws, and occupied in the pursuit of their ordinary industry, than scattered throughout the cities of Italy, as so many agents and ambassadors of treason and of all the discontented at home, with no other occupation or interest in their lives than conspiring unceasingly against the power which had banished them.

Among the citizens recently exiled was Benedetto

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Peruzzi; and he was residing at Padua. Through Padua, too, Charles of Durazzo, who was marching into Italy supported by the King of Hungary, and with the approbation of Pope Urban VI., against Giovanni of Naples, had to pass. Here was an opportunity, and here were elements of mischief, which it was not to be expected that Florentine "fuorusciti" would allow to escape them. But this time it seems to have been the discontented at home of whom the city, as we know, was full, who were first struck by the opportuneness of the circumstances. A.D. 1379.

There was one Gianozzo Sacchetti in the city, who seems to have been a scamp of the very first water. He affected to be specially and extraordinarily religious, consorted with friars, and practised all sorts of austerities. Nevertheless, he had been in prison for debt; and had got out by inducing a fellow-prisoner to entrust him with jewels to a large amount, and then keeping the property and denying the trust. This promising subject was sent—as we may assume, for it is little likely that the idea of the conspiracy originated with himself—to Peruzzi and the other exiles at Padua. It would seem either that Charles of Durazzo declined to enter into any such plot, or that the exiles thought they could more advantageously use his name than himself. For Benedetto Peruzzi, who was, we are told, a very skilful cutter of precious stones, made a facsimile of Charles of Durazzo's signet, and sent forged letters written in his name to Florence, promising to march troops against the city, to replace all the exiles, and restore the government of the Commonwealth to the oligarchy * from whose hands it had been wrested by the Ciompi rising.

* "Che quelli delle famiglie rimarrebbero signori dello stato," is Ammirato's phrase;—"that *those of the families* should remain masters of the government,"—*i.e.*, the scions of the clique of families, which by the action of the Guelph party magistracy and laws had got all political power into their hands.—Ammirato, lib. xiv. Gonf. 528.



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A.D. 1579. Gianozzo travelled back to Florence with these forged letters; and having called together a large meeting of the party at a villa at Marignolle, a village a few miles outside the Leghorn gate of Florence, there exhibited them, and demanded from the party three thousand florins on the strength of them.

But the Government had also been awake to the importance of the march of a prince on his adventures with a body of troops at his heels from Lombardy to Naples. So they had sent ambassadors to Charles,—Tommaso Strozzi (the late friend and patron of the Ciompi, it will be observed), Donato Barbadori, and Marco Benvenuti—to inquire a little into his plans and purposes. And these ambassadors wrote to the Signory, recommending them to lay hands immediately on one Gianozzo Sacchetti, who was returning from those parts to Florence, and to insist upon knowing what was the subject of his interviews with Benedetto Peruzzi at Treviso.

So an hour or two after Messer Gianozzo had slipped out of the Leghorn gate to go to the meeting at Marignolle, Messer Conte de' Gabrielli, the Podestà, with three or four of his men came riding out that way. He did not ride so quickly or so cautiously, however, but that the party assembled at Marignolle got such notice of his coming as enabled all of them to escape, except Gianozzo himself and another Peruzzi, named Bonifacio. They were arrested and brought back to prison; and the wretched Gianozzo was at once ordered to the rack. A very few turns of it brought out a full confession of all he had to tell. He was beheaded on the 15th of October;* and Peruzzi very narrowly escaped the same fate, having only been condemned, in consequence of the powerful interest made for him by his family, though not without

* Stefano Coppi, lib. x. rubr. dccexxi.

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bringing a considerable amount of indignation upon the Signory, to pay a fine of two thousand golden florins to the Republic within a month. Various other condemnations were pronounced, and Benedetto Peruzzi was sentenced to death if ever he fell into the hands of the Signory. A.D. 1379.

The Signory had reason to believe, however, very shortly afterwards, that if Carlo da Durazzo had had nothing to do with the treason of Gianozzo Sacchetti, he was nevertheless more or less engaged in plots and intrigues with the Florentine exiles. There were various signs of storm and trouble abroad too, which allowed the perplexed Signory no rest or tranquillity, and which kept up in the city a continual condition of alarm and irritation. One morning news is brought that a small body of strange troops had menaced the little town of Figline, appearing before the gate at day-break: but riding off again when they found that by the provident care of the governor the gates were, contrary to the usual habit, still shut. Then other bodies of strange troops are reported by the friendly government of Bologna to have been seen riding over the mountains which separate the Bolognese territory from the Valdarno. And it is thought that their errand is probably connected with the attempt upon Figline. Giovanni Aguto too,—Sir John Hawkwood, once upon a time, when he trod the green fields of merry England, which he shall never see again, but Giovanni Aguto, now and ever in Italian history, in which alone he has carved out his place, —Giovanni Aguto, Captain of Free Lances in the pay of the Republic, sends a letter couched in the most ambiguous terms, insinuating that a great peril is threatening the Commonwealth; that the person from whom he has his information will only make it known to the Signory in the presence of him, Aguto; but that if the worshipful Signory will send a duly accredited representative to him at his



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A.D. 1379. camp out in the hills near the Romagna frontier, with fifty thousand golden florins in his pocket as a fee for his services in the matter, and further, a free pardon for six of the persons who should be implicated by the disclosures to be made, then such representative shall be brought face to face with the man, kept in the background, who knows all about it, and shall receive full information.

And what is that grievously perplexed and honestly well-meaning little knot of elderly tradesmen, sitting in their council chamber in the core of the huge castle-palace, which is the heart of Florence, sitting and living there like State prisoners, and representing for their two months of office the power and majesty of the Commonwealth—what is the puzzled Signory to do in the matter? A very doubtful and difficult matter! That Messer Aguto is always greedy for money! A most excellent Captain, and the Republic's very good servant! Not a word to be whispered against him! But . . . . Fifty thousand florins is a serious sum . . . . too much to be lightly spent on a cock-and-bull story! And it does look . . . . eh? And then again, the person to send on such an errand! If Aguto is honest in the matter, and does not sell us, our own envoy may! On the other hand, it is most certain that the times are critical and troublous. Why, the very atmosphere of Florence is full of plots and conspiracies. It will never do to neglect such a warning? But whom to send then? Some one, if it be possible, who will not put the florins of the State into his own pocket, and who will have head enough to feel his way with Messer Aguto, and find out whether he has got any secret to sell before handing over the cash.

So at last, after much debate, Guccio Guccione, of the late "*Santi*" of the War board, a man so rich as to be deemed above temptation, and held to be the honestest man in Florence, is despatched with many instructions and

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cautions, and the fifty thousand gold pieces in his saddle-bags. And Guccio starts on his delicate mission with such secrecy that his own wife and sons think he has only gone out to his villa. And then we have a most romantically suggestive glimpse of the interview in the tent of Messer Giovanni Aguto, where "by the light of a little burning brasier only, an unknown stranger was introduced." * Messer Guccio, however, did his part so well, that after long bargaining, he bought all the secret for twenty thousand florins. A.D. 1380.

Then the ambassadors came home from Carlo da Durazzo; and the conduct of one of the three, Barbadori, was asserted to have been so equivocal, and the opinion of his colleague Strozzi,† that he had been implicated in treasonable intercourse with the "*Fuorusciti*," so strong, that it became necessary to call him publicly to account, specially for a certain supper to which he had been invited by several of the exiles, and "to which he had not asked his fellow-ambassadors to accompany him." ‡ In vain Barbadori, who had during a long life had the reputation of a faithful and patriotic citizen, protested that he had always been a lover of good cheer, and had only accepted the invitation because he thought the supper would be choice, and had abstained from taking his colleagues with him, only because he thought they would not be welcome; he was condemned to lose his head, and was subsequently executed. This was the same Donato Barbadori, who so boldly and patriotically defended the cause of Florence before the Pope and Papal court. In many embassies he

* Ammirato, lib. xiv. Gonf. 529; Coppo Stefani, lib. x. rubr. dccexxviii.

† It will be remembered that this Strozzi was the patron of the Ciompi, and a thorough demagogue; while Barbadori was by family connection an aristocrat. It looks very much as if Strozzi's accusation was a mere trumped-up story.

‡ Ammirato, lib. xiv. Gonf. 529.

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A.D. 1380. had deserved well of his country; and it is hardly likely that such a man should have turned traitor in his old age.

Other denunciations of plots and conspiracies, with more or less of truth in them, were continually being made to the Signory; and the pages of the contemporary historian, Coppo Stefani, are full of long lists of those convicted and condemned, some to death, and some to fines, and some to banishment, for being implicated in them.

In fact, the feeling in the city against the oligarchical party, which had so long oppressed it by the system of Admonitions, was again running—or perhaps it would be more correct to say, had never ceased to run—very high. Checked for a brief space by the excesses of the Ciompi, and the absolute necessity for strengthening the hands of the authorities sufficiently to put an end to that state of anarchy, the still unslaked hatred and animosity against the aristocrats had revived, and was demanding vengeance, and proscriptions and executions. And the demagogues, who had put themselves forward as leaders and protectors of the people, were availing themselves of the irritation in the popular mind, to clear the political stage of hated and dreaded rivals. The Captain of the People, and the Podestà, whose functions required them to be the executors of these condemnations, both of them foreign nobles, uninfluenced by Florentine party hatreds, who, therefore, unwillingly suffered themselves to be made the instruments of them, and whose sympathies were naturally rather with men of their own class, hunted down by an encroaching democracy, than with their accusers and judges, were little zealous in carrying out the sentences against the prisoners in their custody. So much so, that a strong outcry arose against these officers for not doing their duty. It was remarked, that the capital condemnations arising out of the recent conspiracies were unequally executed. A much larger number of those which fell on the obscure instruments of the real

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criminals had been carried out, than of those which had equally condemned the heads of the oligarchical party. And the city was not in a humour to bear this. A stern demand for blood arose, and menacing murmurs were heard against the Podestà and the Capitano themselves. A.D. 1380.

Implicated in one of the numerous plots of this period, two aristocrats, Giovanni di Piero Anselmi and Filippo di Biagio degli Strozzi, together with several accomplices, had been found guilty and condemned to death. But delay took place in the execution of the sentence; and a report ran through the city that the Capitano was preparing to go off from Florence, he and his prisoners with him by night. So a guard of fifty armed citizens were placed around his palace during the night to prevent the execution of any such plan if it really were contemplated, and to enforce the due execution of the sentence. Giovanni Anselmi and Filippo Strozzi, accordingly, were led out to execution in the Piazza, which was thickly crowded with people gathered to witness their death; when a ridiculous incident occurred, which may serve to indicate the singularly nervous and susceptible state of the popular mind, which had been fed with stories of plots and treasons and dangers till, like children who have listened to tales of supernatural horror, they dared not look behind them, and the smallest unexpected incident was enough to produce any amount of confusion and disturbance.

When, according to the usual practice, the sentence of the men to be executed had been read aloud to the populace, a crazy woman in the front ranks of the crowd, at the conclusion of the reading, uttered a prolonged and terrible groan. Those near her pressed forward to ascertain who it was that thus openly expressed sympathy with treason. The movement expanded like the circles round the spot where a stone has been cast into still water. In another instant a mad panic had taken com-

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A.D. 1380. plete possession of the entire multitude. A noise of voices burst forth, which frightened and rendered unmanageable the horses of the guard of soldiers; and these plunging among the thickly-packed crowd increased the terror. To run away and escape from the Piazza was for the moment the one sole desire of every individual there. But it was not easy to do so. The mouths of the narrow streets opening on the square were so choked by the rush of the crowd madly struggling into them, that the mass of living beings became jammed up; and the consequent impossibility to advance still further increased the terror of those behind, to whom the cause of their detention in the Piazza was unexplained.

Five individuals were crushed to death by the pressure of the crowd; and when at last the people had succeeded in getting away, "there were shoes, caps, and slippers left on the Piazza enough to make a horse-load."* The guards themselves and the executioner with his attendants had all shared in the epidemic madness of the panic, and had fled. The condemned men and the *Capitano di Popolo* remained alone. Nothing would have been easier than for the former to have escaped. But Strozzi, instead of doing so at once, began to taunt and insult the Capitano. The opportune moment passed. The guards and officials learning the causelessness of their panic, returned; and at the order of the Capitano, seized the prisoners, and quickly made an end of the interrupted business of the morning.

By the time the execution was over, a number of the populace had returned to the Piazza, and began to cry for the other prisoners their accomplices to be brought out to execution. "The palace of the Capitano was shut and barred; and if it had not been so, both he and the

* Coppo Stefani, lib. x. rubr. dcccxxxiv.

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prisoners would have been in great danger. The Capitano said he had put them to the question during the night; and they had confessed nothing. On this ground he excused himself, saying to the guard of citizens who were posted around his palace, 'Put these men to death yourselves if you are determined to do so. For as I have not found them guilty, I will not do it.' * So that all the city was murmuring and in arms; and the people said, 'If he does not put the prisoners to death he shall be cut in pieces, he and they, and all their families, males and females, and their houses burned.' "† A.D. 1380.

The Captain, however, still stood firm; but the number and violence of the populace around the prison increased every moment. And it soon became evident not only that there was no hope of saving the lives of the prisoners, but that if the raging mob were further irritated it would go hard with their houses and families. Some of those thus exposed to danger obtained access to the prison, and setting before the prisoners the condition of the city and the temper of the people, exhorted them to submit voluntarily to their fate, rather than involve all connected with them in their destruction.

Old Piero degli Albizzi, the head of that great and turbulent family, a bitter aristocrat, and supporter of the atrocious system of "admonition," was among the prisoners; and was the first to propose that they should meet their deaths calmly, voluntarily, and with dignity, rather than be torn in pieces, and see those they loved exposed to the same fate. The chroniclers give the words of his long speech on the occasion. It is not probable

* It is impossible to read the words recorded by the contemporary chronicler without being reminded of those spoken by another Captain, urged by the populace to put to death a prisoner, in whom he had found no fault.

† Coppo Stefani, lib. x. rubr. dccexxxiv.

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A.D. 1380. that any such was uttered. The words used must have been few, broken, and bitter. Every reader may easily imagine them and the scene for himself. There is no doubt about the facts. The men whose lives were demanded by the people, called the Captain to them, and said, "What is it that we must confess, in order that you may put us legally to death? We are ready to die!" The Captain replied that he could say nothing to them in reply to such a demand. If they were conscious of the guilt attributed to them, he was ready to examine them and hear their confession. "Then," said the proud old Albizzi, "we have spoken, one with this man, and another with that, for the disturbance of the present order of things. Enough!" So this confession was recorded, and the prisoners walked one after another to the block, and were beheaded before the people.

The death of Barbadori had previously caused a very general feeling of indignation and shame among the better sort of the citizens of all classes; and was, perhaps, the first circumstance that turned, or at all events indicated, that the tide of popular feeling in the city was on the point of turning. Ever since the outbreak in June, 1378, it had been running very strongly against the aristocratic faction.* The demagogues, who had at that time pushed themselves into the position of leaders of the people, Salvestro de' Medici, Giorgio Scali, Tommaso Strozzi, and Benedetto Alberti,—the last three more prominently; for Salvestro died shortly after this, and being perhaps infirm or out of health, is less heard of after the Ciompi outbreak;—had succeeded in getting all the power of the State into their hands. And we have seen how actively they pushed on the

* It is necessary to remember, when using such expressions, that no such social element as is usually called aristocratic in other communities, is here intended. The aristocrats of Florence were merely the richer, and more largely dealing of her traders.

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work of clearing the political stage of all those who were most in their way by condemnations and proscriptions. But the execution of Barbadori was a capital error. And the returning wave of popular reaction against the increasingly intolerable results of popular excesses flowed, as is ever the case in a similar conjunction of circumstances, more rapidly and more violently than the tide had previously set in the opposite direction. A.D. 1380.

Nevertheless, the demagogues failed to mark and take warning by these first signs of a change in the temper of the citizens. The dominant triumvirate—(for Tommaso Strozzi, Giorgio Scali, and Benedetto Alberti were so strongly banded together, and acted so completely in accord, that they merited that appellation given them by Litta in his celebrated work on the historical families of Italy,*)—flattered themselves that their influence with the lowest orders of the populace was still powerful enough to enable them to brave the public opinion of the classes, which had been recently so thoroughly intimidated. They continued, therefore, to bring forward almost daily new accusations against their adversaries for implication in some of the many plots which had been really discovered or invented, and when this could not be managed, to suborn testimony, convicting obnoxious individuals of imaginary designs against the popular constitution of the Republic.

The accounts of these multiplied real and pretended plots have been recorded with a degree of detail, which, curious as the pictures of the time afforded by them frequently are, cannot be given to them in these pages. The reader desirous of acquiring a more full and accurate conception of the life of Florence in those days, may obtain it from the quaint, ill-written and confused, but yet

* Litta, Celebre Famiglie Italiane. See the name of Filippo, son of Biagio Strozzi in the genealogy of that family.

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A.D. 1382. suggestive, chronicle of the cotemporary Marchionne di Coppo* Stefani, or, with less labour, from the more condensed but still full and subsequently written history of Ammirato. And the perusal of either of these authors will hardly fail to lead him to draw a parallel between these passages of Florentine history and a memorable period in our own annals, when a similarly fevered and unhealthy excitable state of the public mind produced a crop of very similar evils.

In Florence the part afterwards sustained by Titus Oates was principally played by one Jacopo Schiattesi, a cloth-shearer, nicknamed Scatizza. And it was a case, in which his zeal outran his discretion, that at last finally set the tide of the popular feeling running in the contrary direction.

There was in office as Gonfaloniere of the Guild of Farriers, a certain Giovanni Cambi, a quiet and elderly citizen, well known and highly respected throughout the city, and a man little likely to mix himself in political intrigues of a doubtful and dangerous nature. Against this citizen Scatizza lodged an information charging him with assembling meetings of armed men in his house, for the purpose of revolutionizing the government. The Signory before whom this accusation had been laid, feeling the monstrosity of it, had contented themselves with quietly ignoring it. But when their term of office expired at the end of the two months, their successors, finding this accusation still undisposed of, and feeling perhaps the change of the *popularis aura* near at hand, decided that before acting upon it against a citizen of such repute as old Giovanni Cambi, it would be well to lay hold of Scatizza

* Cited here always as "Coppo Stefani," though Coppo was in fact the name of his father, because the reader will so most readily recognise him in the somewhat rare collection of the "Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani."

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and examine him a little as to the nature of his suspicions and the evidence he could bring forward in support of them. Suddenly, therefore, and without any process which might have given the triumvirate and their creatures time to invent evidence, or perhaps to stir up the masses of the people, they seized Scatizza, had him lodged in the Palace, and at once subjected to those means for the discovery of truth, which were deemed so infallible in those days. The sight of these, however, was sufficient to produce from the scared wretch not only a confession, that all the facts alleged against Cambi were utterly false, but also a long statement of similar atrocious calumnies, of which he and his fellows had been guilty in the service of their masters. A.D. 1383.

For the crimes and atrocities thus confessed the Signory condemned Scatizza to death; and he was accordingly handed over to the custody of the Capitano. But it was not to be supposed that the hitherto all-powerful triumvirate would quietly allow this sentence on their creature to be carried out. And hurrying to the Palace, they so overbore the weak Signory "by threats, promises, flattery, and intimidation,"* that they obtained from them an order that Scatizza should be delivered up into their hands. The Captain, however, refused to obey this order; whereupon the demagogue triumvirate (more especially and prominently Giorgio Scali) went in the night of that day, the 12th of January, 1383, to the residence of the Capitano with a rabble mob at their heels, and took Scatizza from his custody by force.

The next day the Captain went publicly to the Palace of the Signory, and solemnly gave up to them his bâton of office, saying, that he had been placed in the position he held for the due execution of the laws, and that since such

* Ammirato, lib. xiv. Conf. 542.

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A.D. 1383. execution was no longer possible in Florence, the sooner he quitted the city the better.*

This demonstration was made in the most public manner; and the indignation in the city against those who had dared to overbear by violence the execution of the law rose high. In a very short space of time it became manifest that the tide had indeed turned. The guilds with their Gonfalonieri and armed men turned out by common accord and marched to the Piazza. A deputation implored the Capitano, who was even then in the Palace taking leave of the Signory, to reassume his bâton and his office, assuring him that no impediment should be thrown in the way of the free execution of its duties, and protesting that they were ready to defend him and the majesty of the law with their lives. They exhorted the Signory to do their duty without fear or favour; and sent immediate messengers to Hawkwood, who happened to be in the immediate neighbourhood, bidding him march into the city with a sufficient force to secure it against any attempt to create disturbance.

Giorgio Scali was warned at his house that the city was rapidly becoming too hot for him; and he was urged to fly. But he mistook the signs of the times sufficiently to imagine, that the dread of the Ciompi was still too strong in Florence for any magistrate to dare to lay hands on him. A few minutes later the officials of the Signory came to arrest him. He made no resistance, saying, that he was perfectly ready to speak with the Signori if they wished it. But it needed only such a glance at the state of things in the city, as his passage through the streets to the Palazzo Pubblico could afford him, to convince him that he had

* In order to understand the force of this manifestation rightly, and to appreciate the disgrace which the burgher community would feel to be inflicted on their city by it, it must be remembered that the Capitano was a foreign noble, invited and employed by the Commonwealth for the purpose.

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made a fatal mistake, and that it was all over with him. A.D. 1383. Bitterly cursing the folly which had placed trust in a fickle and ungrateful populace, he was taken to prison amid the shouts and hootings of the people; and on the following day was decapitated within twenty hours from the time of his arrest.

Tommaso Strozzi escaped to Mantua, and there founded a family which is extant in that city to the present day.

Two noted discoverers of plots and witnesses against those accused of them were hunted out, and absolutely torn in pieces by the people. The children dragged hideous fragments of their bodies about the streets; and eventually all that remained of them was thrown into the Arno.

Then all that had been done in the city since the rising of the Ciompi had to be undone, and all the road, which the political constitution had traversed, to be retraced. A "reform," as it was always called, was made in the distribution of the offices,—now as ever the main object in all Florentine revolutions. The Gonfaloniere was to be elected from the seven upper guilds exclusively. The Priors were to be chosen half from the seven upper, and half from the fourteen lower guilds. The two or three new guilds added by the Ciompi were abolished. All those who had been exiled and imprisoned for participation in any of the recent real or pretended conspiracies were recalled and set at liberty.

All the changes, or rather restorations, made were modifications of the constitution in an aristocratic direction. But bearing in mind what was meant by aristocracy in Florence, it can hardly be said that the reaction was thus far excessive or unreasonable. But when the now once again dominant party proceeded to exile Michele Lando, the Ciompi Gonfaloniere, who, when the burgher aristocrats of the guilds were hiding in corners and quaking before the

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A.D. 1383. storm, had by his courage, sense, and energy preserved Florence from the extreme excesses of anarchy, they were guilty of an ungenerous and ignoble ingratitude, but too characteristic of the undying and vindictive hatred which disgraced Italian party contests.

Florence was disgraced by permitting that injustice; and was duly and appropriately punished for the sin by no lame-footed Nemesis, when within a year or two the old oligarchic aristocratic faction were once again as actively "admonishing" and proscribing their adversaries and those who were obnoxious to them as ever.

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## CHAPTER IV.

Florentine foreign as contrasted with internal politics—Return of the aristocratic party to power contemporary with the need for able statesmanship in the foreign affairs of the Commonwealth—Giangaleazzo Visconti—His ambition and encroachments—Florence imperatively bound to check his power—Beginning of quarrels between him and Florence—Intrigue with Siena—Condottieri—Evil of them—Pandolfo Malatesta—Suspicions of treasonable correspondence between Florentines and the Duke—Prudence of Vieri de' Medici—Pisa under Piero Gambacorti—Intrigues of Visconti in that city—Jacopo Appiano—His treason—Disquieting state of things in Perugia—Trouble with Siena—Progress of the Visconti power—Invitation to Charles VI. of France to march against the Visconti—Francesco da Carrara a cause of war between Florence and Visconti—Conduct of Pisa when solicited by Visconti to intrigue against Florence—War declared by Florence in May, 1390—Mode of raising money in Florence—Forced loans—Courage of the political attitude assumed by Florence—Giovanni Aguto engaged for the war, and other captains—The war carried into Lombardy—Armagnac, commanding for Florence, defeated—The Florentine territory defended by Hawkwood—The Florentines contrast the conduct and value of their French and English defenders—Honour voted to the latter—Conditions of peace between Florence and Visconti—Peace signed 26th January, 1392—Discontent of the people against the Albizzi—Vieri de' Medici refuses to engage in any revolutionary projects.

From the Ciompi outbreak in 1378 to the year 1390, Florence was at peace with the rest of Italy: and her history during these twelve years is mainly taken up with the "domestica facta" which occurred within her walls. The years immediately following 1390, were occupied in one of the most arduous and dangerous wars in which the Commonwealth was ever engaged; and, as usual, Florence, as soon as ever circumstances call upon us to look at her



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A.D. 1383. from without, instead of from within, is seen to better advantage. The idea which the stout old Guelph community leaves on the mind of a student of the general aspects of Italian history, is indeed almost invariably a favourable and grand one. Foremost of all her contemporary cities in all the pursuits and results of industry, in wealth, in art, in literary culture, she appears at every crisis the champion and bulwark of Italian liberties; sagaciously scanning from that central core of the heart of Italy, the majestic Palazzo Pubblico, in her Piazza, the intricate and tangled course of mediæval Italian, and indeed European politics, and always exercising on them an enlightened and beneficial influence in the interest of freedom and civilization. What sort of appearance the most republican of all republics made, when looked at from within, at least during this—not the least flourishing period of her history,—has been seen in the last chapter.

The domestic history of the Commonwealth during these twelve years, told summarily and by the aid of marking incidents, in such sort as may, it is hoped, convey a tolerably accurate impression of a story, the detailed narrative of which would occupy all the space which it is here intended to devote to the four centuries of Florentine liberty, seems to nineteenth-century readers that of a community on the eve of universal anarchy and dissolution. The desperate struggles, which at this distance of time deceptively appear as if they were the whole and sole occupation and business of the lives of the citizens, were worse and more dangerous to the social fabric, than the utterly and avowedly lawless violence of civil war. For they were carried on by the more permanently injurious means of foolish, violent, contradictory, and unconstitutional legislation. The citizen of a modern constitutional community reads with a sense of indignation, of laws, which

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placed the lives, property and civil rights of the citizens absolutely at the mercy of the oligarchical members of a dominant faction, and of the attempt to remedy this intolerable evil by a host of other laws, no less unjust and violent, and still more impracticable and anti-social. And even the subject of a nineteenth-century absolute monarchy is inclined to think that, for him too, social science has made notable progress since the days when such a state of things was possible. A.D. 1390.

Yet there are circumstances, which may perhaps lead to the suspicion, that the narratives of events which happened four hundred years ago—ample as they are beyond all other example of human story—do not set forth all the motives and reasons which led those restless, but shrewd old republicans to act as they did. For instance, we have just seen the "*nobili popolani*," —the oligarchical class of wealthy trading burghers, that is to say—bankers, cloth-merchants, and silk-mercers, inhabiting palaces, at the head of large and powerful families, with names known throughout civilized Europe, both on the exchanges of commercial cities, and in the cabinets of foreign sovereigns,—we have just seen these men restored to the position of a dominant oligarchy by a counter-revolution, almost as tumultuous and lawless as that which hurled them from their seats twelve years previously. We are also just about to see the commencement of a period of great difficulty, danger, and complexity in the foreign relations of the Commonwealth, a period when great sagacity, a thorough knowlege of the interests, passions, and designs of a large number of princes and popular communities, and considerable powers of statesmanship, were absolutely necessary for the conservation of Florence in that pre-eminent, proud, and praiseworthy position, which it had won for itself among the states of the peninsula. All this was demanded by the



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A.D. 1390. events of the time; and all this was forthcoming in Florence.

Now the contemporaneousness of these two circumstances,—of the return of the oligarchy to power in Florence, and of the absolute necessity for a supply of large statesmanship at the helm of affairs, is a striking and surely significant fact, worthy of a degree of attention which none of the historians have accorded to it. It cannot be supposed that those poor Ciompi of the Florentine workshops and tanyards, with their laws against the payment of debts; or the turbulent demagogues, whose power depended on flattering the passions and caprices of that ignorant populace, would have been capable of successfully steering the Commonwealth through the dangers of the difficult period that was opening before it. Men of another stamp were needed to serve the turn; men, not patriotic, as judged by the standard of the Florentine market-places and workshops and drinking taverns, which held true patriotism to consist in placing all the governing power of the state in the hands of the lowest classes, but genuinely patriotic in the estimation of all those abroad or at home, who regarded, not their opinions and doings with respect to the partition of Florentine prosperity and greatness among Florentines, but their opinions, efforts, and doings, with respect to the position of Florence among the communities of Italy, without the security of which there would have been no prosperity and greatness to divide.

What would have happened to Florence, had she been compelled to cope with the difficulties of the period now commencing with her Ciompi and Ciompi-chosen leaders at the helm of the State, it is difficult to say. Florence suddenly rose against them and put them down, accepting again the rule of the aristocrats she had rejected, just when the complexion of the times demanded such a

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change. Are we justified in supposing that this opportune change in the temper of the fickle city was the result of mere caprice and chance? These Florentines, it must be remembered, were in that self-government of theirs attempting an enterprise untried before in the world,—at least since the all-obliterating deluge of the barbarian invasion,—aud much that was needed to be done in the prosecution of that high emprize had to be done by rough, improvised, and unskilful methods. May it not be surmised that that want-of-confidence vote so rudely passed in the streets of Florence, and so summarily acted on, as has been seen at the end of the last chapter, was in some degree motived by other considerations than those which are recorded to have been put forward so tumultuously on the day when Giorgio Scali was led to execution? A.D. 1386.

Already in 1386, the growing power of Giangaleazzo Visconti, the tenth* duke of Milan of that family, began to give umbrage, not only to all the sovereign princes his neigbours, but also to Florence. His ancestors and predecessors in the sovereignty of Milan had been ever ambitious, violent, and unscrupulous princes, eager to increase their power and extend their dominions, wholly careless of the character of any means which might offer itself to them for that object, scourges to their own hereditary subjects, and a constant trouble to the rest of Italy. But no one of the evil race had been so dangerous a man to Italy as Giangaleazzo. They were high-handed masterful tyrants, red to the elbows with the blood alike of their enemies, their subjects, and their kinsmen. Giangaleazzo, yet more insatiably ambitious than they, and equally unscrupulous, approached the objects of his desire by schemes of deep-laid policy, veiled under the most profound hypocrisy, and a semblance of the strictest religious devotion.†

* Litta, Famig. Celeb. Ital. Famiglia Visconti Tavola VI. † *Ibid.*

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A.D. 1387. In 1386, having made himself sole master of the immense hereditary possessions of his family, including Brescia, Bergamo, Pavia, Lodi, Cremona, Milan, and in fact the whole of the western part of Lombardy, by an act of the grossest treachery against his uncle Bernabò, he asked from Pope Urban VI. the title of King of Italy. The modest request was rejected; and Giangaleazzo set to work to attain a position, to which it might be more difficult to refuse that title when he should again make the demand.

His first step was to attack his nearest and most powerful neighbours the Scaligeri, lords of Verona. In this enterprise Francesco da Carrara, lord of Padua, was his ally; and Verona, by the help of a Veronese exile, who found means to corrupt some of the garrison, was taken in 1387. Verona having fallen, its dependent city, Vicenza, did not offer a very obstinate resistance to the invader. But by the terms of the alliance between Giangaleazzo and Francesco da Carrara, Vicenza, when taken by their united efforts, was to become the prize of the lord of Padua, to whose dominions it lies so conveniently contiguous. This, however, did not at all suit the views of Visconti; who, in order to escape the obligation of his engagement with his ally, contrived to arrange that the city should declare that it gave itself up to his wife Caterina, who was a Scaliger; and then, with a stroke of characteristic hypocrisy, declared that he could not by his own will set aside the wishes of the people.

It was perhaps one of the earliest applications of the principle of universal suffrage, as practised so successfully in more civilized times.

Francesco da Carrara, exceedingly enraged at this breach of good faith, separated himself from his dangerous ally, complaining loudly of the wrong done him. This afforded Giangaleazzo the pretext he desired for quarrelling with Francesco, and attacking Padua, which fell into his hands

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in 1388, uniting thus under his rule nearly the whole of Lombardy. The Venetians, assuredly with less than their usual political wisdom, had permitted their jealousy of their neighbour Francesco of Padua to lead them into allying themselves on this occasion with the Visconti. A.D. 1388.

Florence, it will be seen, had cause enough to feel uneasy at the progress of such a man in his career of successful invasion and usurpation;—Florence, no more specially than other of the free towns around her, save that Florence seems always to have thought that she had more to lose from the loss of her liberty than any of the other cities,—was more devotedly and unchangeably attached to her popular constitution, and felt always called upon to take upon herself the duty of standing forward as the champion and supporter of the principles of republicanism and free government. And most assuredly again and again during the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, the tide of absolutism would have swallowed up the free communities of central Italy, and swept in one broad unbroken stream over the whole land, had it not been for Florence, which, fickle as she may have been in many things, had been at least hitherto ever constant, firm, and unchanging in her hatred for despotism, and her determination to do and suffer all things rather than submit herself to it.

The Pope, Urban VI., added another element of disturbance to the condition of Italy. For in his anxiety to recover sundry cities mainly in Umbria and Romagna, which had freed themselves or been wrenched by native tyrants from the dominion of the Holy See during the period of the "Babylonian captivity" at Avignon, he was exceedingly unscrupulous of means, and might at any moment be found allying himself with the enemies of free government and of the old Guelph cause in Italy. Venice also, having most improvidently and unwisely allied herself with Visconti, constituted another element of danger, and

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A.D. 1388. an additional cause of uneasiness and watchfulness to the Florentine government.

In the spring of 1388, therefore, a board of ten, "*Dieci di Balia*," was elected for the general management of "all those measures concerning war and peace, which should be adopted by the entire Florentine people." * Among these ten we find the well-known names of Soderini, Altoviti, Bardi, Minerbetti, Arrighi,—all members of the burgher noblesse,—and two only representatives at the board of the minor guilds.

The first circumstance which gave the Visconti an opportunity of interfering in the affairs of Tuscany arose out of the doings of the obscure little mountain town of Montepulciano. It will be remembered that that little community, too weak to maintain its own independence, and too high-spirited to rest contented under the sovereignty of another city, was in old times a bone of contention and a cause of jealousy and misunderstanding between Florence and Siena. Now again Montepulciano had been appealing from Siena to Florence; and Florence had not been able to abstain from assuming at least airs of protection, and, to a certain degree, of supremacy. The Sienese, not less jealous of the greatness and ascendancy of their old rivals than in the long-past days of Montaperti, were irritated into committing the great fault of offering themselves, "their city, their property, their children and themselves," says Ammirato,†—to the Visconti.

It is observable, that such a proposal, made by a free Tuscan city to a Lombard despot, was evidently regarded as a disgraceful step,—as treason in some sort against the superior freedom and advancement of the Tuscan family of cities. These might fairly and naturally quarrel among themselves as much as they pleased; but it was evidently

* Ammirato, lib. xv. Gonf. 578. † Lib. xv. Gonf. 580.

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felt that to call a Lombard despot into Tuscany was conduct that any Tuscan community ought to be ashamed of. When Florence remonstrated accordingly, Siena declared that she had never had any idea of doing anything of the sort. But it was clear at all events that she had sent ambassadors to Giangaleazzo. For while the bickering between the two cities was going on, ambassadors from the Visconti arrived in Florence, who came to express in the most friendly and flattering terms their master's great concern at having heard reports to the effect that Florence was displeased at his having received ambassadors from the city of Siena. He begged them to believe that he was very far from wishing to meddle in any way with the affairs of Tuscany;—that, besides the consideration of what was right and just, he was not so ignorant as to be unaware of the danger and impolicy of undertaking the government of a city so far distant from his own states;—that it was true the Sienese had proposed offering him some kind of titular supremacy over their state, but that he had declined to accept anything of the sort. He begged the Florentines therefore, "towards whom his sentiments were those of sons towards their fathers,"* to think well of him, and to be assured that his wish was to give them every reason to do so. It was true also that he had marched troops into Romagna and the district of Bologna. But the object of this was solely to put down the various bodies of free-lances, who were infesting the country, and whom it was equally the interest and wish of the Florentines themselves, as of himself and of all regular and well-disposed governments, to curb and punish. A.D. 1388.

However specious and transparent this pretext may have been, it was impossible to deny the truth of the statement. Ever since the commercial cities and the princes of Italy

* Ammirato, lib. xv. Conf. 579.

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A.D. 1388. had first committed the fatal imprudence of hiring independent bodies of foreign troops to assist them in their quarrels with each other, the country had never been free from the ravages and extortions of these bands, which assumed every shade of character, ranging from that of regularly commissioned armies to that of mere wandering gangs of brigands, according as their leaders had more or less pretensions to respectability and responsibility of social position, and as they succeeded more or less in finding a regular demand for their services. Ready and willing for the most part to accept employment and pay in the service of any prince or city or party who would engage them, the necessity of supporting themselves somehow, when they were out of service, caused them to become at such times little better than mere bandits, whose hand was against every man. And in that same year the Florentines had sent Maso degli Albizzi (the head of that great family after old Piero's death by the hand of the headsman, and now the most powerful citizen in Florence) to Pandolfo Malatesta, who had put himself at the head of one of these bands, to tell him how shocked the Florentine Signory was that a man in his position should have taken to such a trade, and made himself the leader of a gang that lived by robbery, to the staining of his own honour, and the disgrace of his noble family;—to warn him at all events not to molest Ancona, Fermo, Ascoli, or Città di Castello, which were friends and allies of the Commonwealth, and still less to come with his cut-throats into Tuscany. But the noble Pandolfo replied that he had spent more than thirty thousand florins in getting his band together, and that he could not maintain them without making raids on the country around him! *

It was impossible, therefore, in replying to the represen-

* Ammirato, lib. xv. Gonf. 580.

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tations of Visconti, to deny that there was urgent need for steps to be taken towards the liberation of Italy from this nuisance. But the Signory were in no degree duped by his fair speeches and plausible professions. And in the January of 1389,* a circumstance occurred which was thought to prove that the Duke of Milan was even then engaged in intrigue against the government of Florence, and that he had already succeeded in inducing at least one member of the Signory to enter into a treasonable correspondence with him. A.D. 1389.

A few days after the new Signory had entered on their office, a man went to the bank of Messer Vieri de' Medici for a thousand crowns on account of the Duke of Milan, who would seem to have had an account with the Florentine banker,—a circumstance which taken alone does not appear to have been regarded with any surprise or suspicion. The Florentine bankers of that period did the money business not only of the greatest part of Italy, but of a very large portion of that of Europe. But it so happened that Messer Vieri knew the applicant at his bank to be a secret and unavowed, but confidential, servant of Giangaleazzo. And his suspicions were further roused by a request of the applicant that the money might be delivered to him in a sealed bag. It is curious and characteristic of the then existing state of society in Florence, that these circumstances at once led the banker to the suspicion that this money was intended as a bribe for some citizen for treasonable purposes. The money was paid, and the agent watched therefore till he was seen to hand the sealed bag over to the late Gonfaloniere Buonaccorsi. Called before the new Signory, that citizen at once confessed that the

* In reading the old Florentine historians, it is always necessary to remember that the old Florentine year began on the 1st of March. So that the date given in the text as the January of 1389, would by them be called the January of 1388.

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A.D. 1389. money had been paid to him by the Duke of Milan, but declared that it was only a loan for two years, intended to assist him in paying his creditors,—a purpose to which it had already been devoted. This defence does not appear to have been deemed worth a moment's attention. Immediate orders were issued to the *Executore di Giustizia* to arrest Giovanni Buonaccorsi; but before the warrant could be executed he had escaped from the city and taken refuge at Siena. He was at once declared a traitor, and was made incapable—he and all his descendants for ever—of holding any office in the republic. A caricatured figure of him, "with a mitre on his head," was painted on the outside of the Palazzo of the *Executore di Giustizia*, with some verses underneath it declaratory of his infamy.*

Any mischief, which it might have been in the power of Buonaccorsi to do by betraying the secrets of the state to one who would shortly, as it from day to day was becoming more evident, be the declared enemy of Florence, was thus put a stop to. But the incident produced a great sensation, and much uneasy feeling of distrust and general suspicion in the city. It was beginning to be felt that dangers were gathering around the Commonwealth, and that the extremest vigilance and prudence on the part of the rulers would be needed.

This duty and observance of *vigilance*, the degree to which it was pushed, the success with which it was practised, the minuteness of it at home, and the far-reaching extension of it to foreign courts and distant cities, is one of the peculiar and specially characteristic features of the old Italian governments, and particularly of the two great republics of Florence and Venice. A remarkable instance of this ubiquitous watchfulness occurs almost immediately after the detection of Buonaccorsi's treachery at home.

* Ammirato, lib. xv. Conf. 582.

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Treason was busy not only at Florence, but at Pisa also. Pisa, under the moderate rule of Piero Gambacorti, whose sympathies were rather democratic and Guelph than favourable to the aristocratic Ghibellinism so many years dominant at Pisa, was now at peace and on friendly terms with Florence. But it was Florentine and not Pisan vigilance which detected it. It had become known to the Signory that several of the leaders of the Pisan exiles (for Pisa, like most of the other Italian cities, had its "*fuorusciti*," as regularly as if their existence had been a regular and necessary part of the constitution of the body social) had had interviews with Giangaleazzo Visconti in Lombardy. And they had further learned, that Messer Jacopo Appiano, the special friend and confidant of Gambacorti, had shortly afterwards visited the Duke with the greatest secrecy. This was more than enough to rouse the suspicions of the Florence Signory; and they despatched messengers to Gambacorti, telling him the facts that had come to their knowledge, saying that great uneasiness was felt upon the subject in Florence, urging him to be vigilant and on the alert, and bidding him remember that he might count on the forces of the republic to aid in protecting Pisa from hostile designs. But Appiano had such influence over Gambacorti, and was so completely trusted by him, that he could not be induced to pay any attention to the Florentine warnings;—an infatuation of which we shall shortly see the consequences. A.D. 1389.

But their misgiving respecting Pisa was only one of a whole host of cares and anxieties, which were pressing upon the successive Signories which, in conjunction with the "*Dieci di Balia*," ruled Florence during those anxious months of 1388 and 1389. The state of things in the friendly republic of Perugia was disquieting. Pope Urban had proposed visiting that city. The Florentines, more alive than the Perugians to the dangers that might arise

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A.D. 1389. from such a visit, sent an embassy to Perugia, urging the citizens to decline the honour. They could not, however, prevail on them to do so. The Pope came to Perugia, and was received there with all respect; perfectly well aware, doubtless, of the endeavours of the Florentines to prevent the Perugians from receiving him, and feeling towards the Commonwealth as may be supposed in consequence;—a disposition of the papal mind not likely to be amended by the terms in which, on his return shortly afterwards to Rome, an embassy sent from Florence, as etiquette prescribed on that occasion, addressed him. It is not a little amusing, indeed, to nineteenth-century readers, to find these stout old burghers congratulating the Holy Father on his return to his metropolis, and adding that "*they hoped he would stay there, as that was his proper place!*"*

The diplomatic activity of the Signory during that period of anxiety was extraordinary. Florentine ambassadors were hurrying to and fro on every road. The Commonwealth despatched an embassy to Venice, to induce that government, if possible, to break with the Visconti, and make peace with Francesco da Carrara; an embassy to Milan, to the Duke, to give him fair words (as false as his own), and to act as spies on his movements; an embassy to Bologna, to encourage that republican government to stand firm for liberty, and to draw closer the bonds of friendship and alliance between Bologna and Florence;—other embassies to Pisa, to assure Gambacorti that mischief was brewing, and to implore him to be vigilant; a second embassy to the Pope, to endeavour to form a league with him against the Visconti, which the Pope would have nothing to say to; an embassy to Montepulciano, to tell that spirited and troublesome ittle community that it must make up its quarrel with Siena, and that Florence could no longer lend

* Ammirato, lib. xv. Gonf. 583.

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it either countenance or protection; and several embassies to Siena, to assure that republic that Florence had no designs on Montepulciano, and had meant honestly by Siena throughout the dispute about the former city. A.D. 1389.

But notwithstanding all these manifold cares, the political horizon around Florence grew blacker and blacker on all sides. The Sienese, unconvinced by all Florence could urge, or stimulated by the old and undying grudge between the two rival cities, persisted in throwing themselves into the arms of Visconti. The Pope was ill-disposed to Florence. The kingdom of Naples was torn by a war of succession. The Venetians were the infatuated allies of the Visconti. The lords of Verona and Mantua were ruined, and their dominions absorbed by the same insatiable usurper. The few remaining princelings of Lombardy were wholly under his influence. The Tuscan republics were by no means of one mind; and small aid could be counted on from any of them. The most staunch and firm among them at this period of imminent peril to the liberties of all of them seemed to be Bologna.

In close alliance with Bologna, therefore, it was determined to take the desperate step of sending ambassadors from the two cities to Charles the Sixth of France, inviting him to march into Italy against Visconti, and holding out to him the hope of the various conquests he might make in Italy by the assistance of the two Guelph republics. The world has had the experience of nearly five hundred years since that time; and it is not to be supposed that the citizen rulers of Florence and Bologna at the close of the fourteenth century could have known, as well as we know now, the fatal nature of the step they were taking. But they did know that it was a dangerous one, to be excused only by the desperate nature of the emergency in which they found themselves. Fortunately for them and for Italy, the proposal came to nothing.

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A.D. 1390. But it was every day becoming clearer that there was nothing left to Florence but to prepare for immediate war, if the progress of Visconti towards universal dominion in Italy was to be arrested. In the spring of 1390, ambassadors from him were openly sounding and soliciting the governments of Siena and Pisa. For Francesco da Carrara, the dispossessed lord of Padua, had carried his tale of wrongs to Florence, and had been, at least, received kindly by the Florentines. And Giangaleazzo chose to consider this treatment of the man whom he had despoiled as an offence against himself, and a sufficient ground of quarrel with Florence. Siena, blinded by her hatred for Florence, declared that she would willingly be subject, not merely to the Visconti, but to the foul fiend himself,* if only she could so find the means of revenging herself on the Florentines.

Pisa, under the rule of Gambacorti, made a different answer to the overtures of the Lombard despot. The Pisans said that it would not at all suit them to quarrel with so powerful a neighbour, with whom they were living on terms of friendship;—that it was altogether false that the Florentines had ever been guilty of an attempt to poison† him (the Duke of Milan);—that it was for him to consider well whether it were wise to risk all that he had hitherto gained from Fortune, by rushing into war with a power, which would prove a very different sort of adversary from the lords of Padua or Verona. They advised him to remember what kind of men these Florentines were—high-spirited, firm, very wealthy, and thoroughly determined to spend every florin, and to be cut to pieces, rather than yield.‡

* Ammirato, lib. xv. Gonf. 587.

† From this fact of the Pisan answer only, we learn that this accusation, so characteristic of the times, had been put forward as a cause of complaint against the Florentines by Visconti.

‡ Ammirato, lib. xv. Gonf. 590.

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At length, in the May of 1390, the Commonwealth decided on taking the initiative in the declaration of war. The troops of Visconti were already committing acts of hostility in the territory of Bologna; and it was quite impossible to doubt that if they did not declare war against him, he would do so at a very early day against them. A Council therefore, consisting of an unusually large number of "*richiesti*," or notable citizens, specially invited by the Signory to assist the government with their counsels upon any point of special importance, was called; in which it was unanimously determined to declare war at once, and to prosecute it with the utmost vigour. A.D. 1390.

It was in the first place determined that no expense should be spared. The most valorous and skilful fighting men that could be had for money were to be hired. It is curious to observe how entirely the great mercantile community had come to consider warfare a matter of spending money. The fierce old Guelphs and Ghibellines, their fathers, when they followed the "*carroccio*" to the field, leaving the city to the old men and women, used to speak of spending the last drop of their blood in the cause, for which they went out to fight. Now Florentine citizens showed their courage and patriotism by their readiness to spend their last florin; and considering how many florins they had, it was not a small resolution.

A board of nine was appointed at once for imposing and collecting taxes on clerical property as well as lay. Another board of six was named to exercise similar powers in the rural districts. In one respect the Ciompi, by an act of spoliation which had caused great disturbance and much individual suffering at the time, had lightened the financial burthens of the Commonwealth, and enabled it more readily to enter on a heavy expenditure. At the time of the ill-managed Pisan war, and when the Commonwealth had been saddled with that enormous futile and



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A.D. 1390. reckless expenditure of treasure for the acquisition of the sovereignty of Lucca, which, as the reader will remember, caused such bitter vexation and humiliation to Florence, money had been borrowed on the terms of "two for one," and even of "three for one," as the phrase, but too familiar in the mouths of the citizens, designated the operation. It was expressly forbidden by law to the government to raise money at more than five per cent. interest. But money could be employed much more advantageously than that in modes that would put it beyond the reach of the Florentine financiers. Funds were imperatively required, and the simple Signory in blank dismay inquired of one another what was to be done. "Nothing is easier!" replied a subtle notary with ideas in advance of his age. "Give only five per cent. for your money; but write down every man who shall give you an hundred florins, the State's creditor for two hundred or three hundred if necessary. The suggestion was adopted, and found to answer admirably . . . . for the while. Only it came to pass that after a while those who had to find the means of paying the public creditor became tired of paying ten and fifteen per cent., and by an arbitrary act of spoliation and repudiation, reduced the payable interest to five per cent. on the sums which had actually been paid into the State coffers. The Commonwealth was ready therefore to enter on a new course of borrowing to meet its new needs.

Of course the first consideration, which will strike the modern reader of this statement of a simple and ready system of finance made easy (as the old title-pages used to say) to the meanest capacity, is that new loans would not be facilitated, but quite the reverse, by a measure of repudiation which must have fatally injured the credit of the Commonwealth. But all such reasoning is of course based on the supposition that the loans made to the State

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were voluntary. And that was by no means the case. The explanation of the working of this system of loans,— "*monti*" as the phrase was by which they were designated,—will be more conveniently treated in a chapter devoted to that subject, which will be found at the end of the Fifth Book of this history. We shall then have reached the period—1427—when a regular system of taxation, properly so called, was first adopted in Florence. Till then the Commonwealth had no regular means or income of any sort save the produce of the customs "*gabelle.*" When that was insufficient for the needs of the State, recourse was had to a system of forced loans, with results that will be seen, when we come to that part of the subject. A.D. 1390.

The unlimited orders for valour of the very best quality, to be purchased in the market regardless of expense, therefore, which the assembled Council empowered the government to give in view of the impending war with Giangaleazzo Visconti, were to be paid for in this manner. And the duty of the two boards of citizens appointed to manage the business, one in the city and one in the country, was to impose on and exact from every citizen, his contribution to as many forced loans as might be needed to accomplish the end in view.

Briefly mentioning here the small fact, that six months of the war with Visconti cost Florence the sum of three millions and a half of golden florins,* each of them worth at least ten times their weight in gold at the present day, we may leave that unpleasant part of the subject,—that *mauvais quart' d'heure*, which is apt to leave so bitter a flavour in the mouth of nations for a rather longer period, and which in the order of things ought to come as usual *pede claudo* after the account of the fine doings to be paid

* Pagnini della Decima, vol. i. p. 33.



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A.D. 1390. for,—and hasten on to tell of the "pride, pomp, circumstance," and glory of the war.

And there *was* a harvest of glory. The part which the Commonwealth played upon this occasion was a really glorious one. Although the Florentine burghers and merchants and craftsmen *did* hire military valour, instead of leaving their banks and counting-houses and workshops to defend their liberties by "native swords and native ranks," nevertheless there was a degree of moral and political courage in the attitude assumed by the mercantile Commonwealth which is very admirable. And the memorable spectacle which Florence then presented cannot but touch a chord of fellow-feeling in the breast of an Englishman. He will admit that amid all the ignorance inseparable from their position of pioneers in a new path of social science, and all the faults and littlenesses into which they were betrayed by overweening selfish and egotistical ambitions, perhaps equally inseparable from a state of things in which political power was within, or nearly within, the grasp of every citizen,—amid all that must in so many ways offend him, there was something very grand and very noble in the undaunted, indomitable, and unanimous determination of these Florentines, so little unanimous on any other subject, that Florence should be free, and the bulwark and hope of freedom in Italy.

Alone, the stout little city,—alone, for Bologna could do little or nothing save suffer itself to be protected by forces in the pay of Florence, and the suspicions which the Signory had conceived respecting Pisa were, as will presently be seen, but too well founded;—alone, Florence was about to resist the most formidable power which Italy had ever yet, since the days of the barbarian invasion, seen united in the hands of one man, and that man a very able and most unscrupulous conqueror, bent on extending his power over the whole of Italy. Alone she did stem the

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advancing tide, if not altogether victoriously, yet with a sufficient amount of success to save herself and those around her from the fatal peril that was menacing them. A.D. 1390.

Nor, even looking at the matter from the narrowest cash-balance point of view, can it be asserted that those three millions and a half of florins, together with the other not smaller sum which the war must have cost before it was brought to a conclusion, were badly spent. Florentine freedom, merely as a possibility for money-making, was worth far more than that. The ever-producing and accumulating industry of the Florentine hive was but partially and temporarily impeded by the war and the sacrifices it necessitated. The rule of Giangaleazzo would have paralysed it for ever. The cities of *his* depressed dominions did not become rich and spread their money-nets over the whole face of Europe.

The first care of the government was to engage "Aguto."* A short time previously, the term of his engagement with Florence having expired, he had taken service in Naples. But at the call of his old patrons he hurried northwards, and was at once despatched to the protection of Bologna. Other renowned generals also were engaged. The Signory "sent into all parts of Christendom to hire captains and soldiers, and to stir up princes and sovereigns to the destruction of the tyrant of Milan."† Rinaldo Orsini, who had distinguished himself as a master of military science, was engaged by the Republic. The Count Giovanni d'Armagnac was also induced to accept an engagement in the same service—the more readily that Carlo, the son of Bernabo Visconti, who had been traitorously deprived of his states by his cousin Giangaleazzo, was his son-in-law.

The terms of Armagnac's engagement—his "*condotta*,"

* Ammirato, lib. xv. Conf. 591. † *Ibid.*

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A.D. 1390. as it was called, worth noting as a specimen of the sort of terms and conditions usual in contracts of this sort—were that he should march into Lombardy with two thousand lances (three horsemen each), and three thousand spearmen, and remain on the territory of Visconti doing him all the mischief in his power for six months certain, and for other six months if the agreement should not be declared at an end by either party, with one month's notice;—that no terms should be made with the enemy or any of his adherents by either party to the agreement without the consent of the other;—that as soon as he should have passed the Rhone on his march, or within fifteen days afterwards at the latest, he should cause all the nobles and captains in his army to swear fidelity to the Republic of Florence, sending a written attestation of the same to the Signory;—that if any city, town, or place should rebel against the Visconti of its own accord, and wish "to live in freedom," or to give itself to any master, not a friend or ally of Visconti, he (Armagnac) should not prevent such city or place from doing so;—but that he might dispose as he pleased of any city or town which he should take;—finally, that the Florentines should in consideration of these services pay him a bounty of fifty thousand golden florins, including his first month's pay, and then fifteen thousand a month for the remainder of his term of service.*

Hawkwood, as we have seen, was sent to begin the war by defending the territory of Bologna against the troops of Visconti; but Francesco da Carrara having succeeded in getting back to Padua, and in wresting the city from its forced allegiance to Giangaleazzo, it was deemed advisable to push the war into Lombardy. It was carried on, however, without any special or decisive success on either side

* Ammirato, lib. xv. Gonf. 594.

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till, after a defeat suffered by Armagnac in the neighbourhood of Alexandria, Jacopo del Verme, a general in the service of Visconti, with an army of Milanese troops, marched by way of Sarzana into Tuscany on the 2nd of July, 1390; and Hawkwood was obliged to march southwards rapidly to the defence of the Florentine territory. A.D. 1390.

The defeat and rout of Armagnac had been most complete, and the destruction and slaughter of the French troops very much greater than was usually the case in the wars of those days, in which the common practice was to retain for the purpose of ransoming them all those who were able to pay, and to let the rest go free. Nor had the hired troops, by whom these wars were mostly carried on, any motive whatsoever for wishing to kill one another. On the contrary, a man of mark killed was the loss of a valuable prisoner. We find accordingly, that the terrible slaughter which almost made an end of Armagnac and his troops in the neighbourhood of Alexandria, was altogether the work of the infuriated peasants of the district, goaded into a general attack on the French camp by the intolerable outrages, robberies, and cruelties of the Frenchmen, in accordance, remarks a subsequent historian in a special note on the passage,* with their never-failing habit, from which the Italians have had to suffer as often as they have ever put any trust in them.

On this occasion the Florentines were strongly impressed by the contrast between the conduct and value of their French and their English allies and protectors. While they bitterly wrote down as a total loss the huge sums, which had been paid to Armagnac for a French army to be utterly destroyed by the consequences of its own crimes and vices, the bravery and fidelity of Hawkwood and his troops were recognised by the grateful city, which sponta-

* Ammirato, lib. xv. Conf. 600.

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A.D. 1391. neously raised his stipend from one thousand two hundred, to three thousand two hundred florins a year. He and his sons were made citizens of the Commonwealth, with exemption from all the burthens, which that quality might normally involve;—a pension of a thousand florins a year was settled on his wife Donnina, who was a daughter of Bernabo Visconti, in case she survived him, and on condition that she should make Florence her residence;—and marriage portions of two thousand florins were assigned to each of his three daughters.

It must be admitted that these rewards were not undeserved or ill-bestowed; for it was due entirely to the generalship and staunch fidelity of Hawkwood and the gallantry of his troops that, notwithstanding the success of Jacopo del Verme, and the destruction of the French troops under Armagnac, Visconti was at the end of the year 1391 not unwilling to make peace on terms which in fact constituted an entire success for the Florentines. They had gone to war for the purpose of putting a stop to his ambitious designs on central Italy; and this they effectually did; for the terms of the peace, arranged by the good offices of Pope Boniface IX., who had succeeded Urban VI. on the Papal throne, through Richard Caracciolo, Grand Master of Rhodes, his envoy at Genoa, and of Antonio Adorno, Doge of Genoa, stipulated that Visconti for the future was not to meddle in any way with the affairs of Tuscany. Francesco da Carrara, whom the Florentines had taken under their protection, was also to be restored to his sovereignty of Padua; and "all paintings which had been made by either side insulting to the other should be effaced."*

* Ammirato, lib. xv. Gonf. 603. At the present day a high-spirited and sensitive Sovereign happily contents himself with prohibiting Punch from entering his dominions, without making a diplomatic demand that all past offending Punches should be burned or otherwise cancelled.

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This peace was signed on the 26th of January, 1392. A.D. 1392.

No sooner was the Commonwealth thus liberated from the anxiety of foreign war than the city began to be distracted by new internal dissensions. The Albizzi, and especially Maso degli Albizzi, the head of the family, were still in the ascendant, and almost all-powerful in the city. The overbearing insolence of these haughty merchants, one young scion of whom in his friendly intercourse with some of the petty tyrant princes of northern Italy was reported to have boasted that the Florentines were just as much at the disposition of the Albizzi as the subjects of an absolute sovereign were at that of their prince, produced a rising against them in the next year. The populace sought out Vieri de' Medici, and entreated him to put himself at their head, as his cousin Salvestro had done. But the time was not yet come; and the cautious old banker contented himself with quietly preparing for the overthrow of the Albizzi, —and of some other things at the same time,—by steadily sticking to his counting-house, and filling the Medicean money-bags; and exerted his authority only to calm the popular effervescence, and preserve the peace of the city.

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## CHAPTER V.

Affairs of Pisa—Friendly relations between that city and Florence—Intrigues of Giangaleazzo Visconti in Pisa—Jacopo d'Appiano—His treason—Murder of Piero Gambacorti, lord of Pisa—Revolution in Pisa—That city declares war against Florence—Death of Sir John Hawkwood—His funeral—Bernardone della Serra general of the Republic—Hostilities against Florence—Demands of the Duke of Milan on Pisa—the Duke's agent imprisoned by Appiano—Florentine ambassadors at Pisa—Appiano deludes them; and again makes friends with the Duke—Truce for two years signed on Easter-day, 1398—Florentine payments to the Condottieri on discharging them—Death of Appiano—Gherardo d'Appiano, his son, thinks of selling Pisa to Visconti—The Florentines interfere to prevent it—Their ambassadors turned out of Pisa—Pisa handed over to the lieutenant of Giangaleazzo—Perugia and Siena give themselves up to Visconti—Truce turned into a peace—Epidemic of fanaticism—The White Companies—This outbreak followed by pestilence in Italy—New rising against the aristocratic government in Florence—Salvestro Cavicciuli gives the Signory information of a plot—Tommaso Davizi taken and beheaded—Proscription of sixty citizens—The informer rewarded—The Albizzi and aristocratic government more firmly established than ever—Fresh grounds of suspicion against Visconti—Bargain between the city and the Emperor Robert of Wittelsbach—Imperial troops defeated by those of Visconti—War breaks out anew between Giangaleazzo and Florence—the Emperor recrosses the Alps—Florence leagues with Bologna—Great defeat of the Tuscan army, and fall of Bologna—Dismay in Florence—Giangaleazzo in Padua—Leaves it to avoid the pestilence—News of the death of Giangaleazzo reaches Florence.

It has been mentioned, that the suspicions which, when the war with Giangaleazzo Visconti was on the point of breaking out, had induced the Florentine Signory to send repeated embassies to Piero Gambacorti, the ruler of Pisa, warning him against his friend and creature Jocopo d' Appiano, and imploring him to be vigilant, were not ill-

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founded. And very shortly after the signature of the terms of peace between Visconti and the Commonwealth, the result of the neglect of the warning by Gambacorti was seen. A.D. 1392.

It was not supposed that the conditions to which the Duke of Milan* had subscribed would be a sufficient safeguard to Italy against his ambition for the future. And Florence, the new Pope Boniface, the Este family, the Gonzagas, the Manfredi, Francesco da Carrara, and the free cities of Pisa and Bologna, had formed a league, the object of which was to oppose any future encroachment of the Visconti. Of all these powers, with the exception of Bologna, Pisa, though she had not been able to do much towards the active prosecution of hostilities, had during the recent war shown herself the most consistently friendly to Florence. Such good relationship between the two powerful communities of the Valdarno was a new state of things in Italy, which had been contemporary with the power of the Gambacorti family in Pisa. No doubt the commercial interests of both cities, the increasing importance of the manufacturing industry of Florence, and the mutually ruinous contests which had driven Florence to use the little and comparatively distant harbour of Telamone as a port for the exportation of her goods, to the infinite injury of either community, had at length taught both cities, standing as they did to each other very much in the same relation which Manchester and Liverpool hold to one another at the present day, that peace and good-fellowship between them were imperatively demanded by their mutual interests. But it was only since the establishment of the

* It may be useful to note that this turbulent and restless disturber of Italy is very frequently spoken of by the Italian historians of the middle ages as the "Conte di Virtù," a title taken by him in right of the county of Virtus in Champagne, which was the dower of his first wife, the daughter of John II. of France.

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A.D. 1392. reasonable and moderate rule of the Gambacorti that such a desirable state of things had been found possible. And it was by means of Pisa that Giangaleazzo, treacherous and restlessly ambitious as ever, who never for an instant, when he signed the articles of peace, had contemplated being stayed by them in his designs on the universal sovereignty of Italy, determined to prepare for a new advance towards his object. No doubt he was encouraged to select this point in the panoply of Tuscan defence against his aggressions for his new attempt, by the existence in Pisa of a large and powerful leaven of that old Ghibelline and aristocratic feeling, which had always made the city hostile to the democratic Guelphism of Florence, and inclined its sympathies rather to the feudal lords of the northern cities. He was doubtless well aware that a wealthy and dangerous portion of the Pisan upper classes ill brooked the peaceful mercantile ascendancy of a policy in contradiction with all the traditions and past history of their country. There was also, as usual, a large body of Pisan exiles, driven from their homes by reason of their disaffection to the present order of things, with whom he was able to intrigue, and turn them to that fatal use to which the "*fuorusciti*" of Italian cities were so invariably put by any prince or power which had an interest in subverting the government, or destroying the liberties, of the community which had exiled them.

But the designs of Giangaleazzo were especially facilitated by the position held in Pisa by a man entirely adapted to his purpose, and by the infatuated confidence reposed in him, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, by Gambacorti. This man was Jacopo d'Appiano. He was the son of one Vanni d'Appiano, a poor and obscure native of the country around Florence. This Vanni having betaken himself to Pisa for the bettering of his fortunes, entered into the service of the Gambacorti family, and rose

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in it to such a distinguished position, that when political misfortunes fell temporarily upon that family, he had the honour of being beheaded as one of their principal adherents. His son Jacopo, educated to be a notary by profession, was turned adrift upon the world, and became a wandering adventurer, living by his wits, in various parts of Italy. But when, by another turn of the wheel of Fortune, Piero Gambacorti became reinstated in the lordship of Pisa, one of his first acts was to seek out Jacopo d' Appiano, the son of the faithful retainer of his family, in order that as the father had suffered with them in their adversity, the son might partake of their restored prosperity. Jacopo asked for the place of "chancellor," which seems to have meant much about what we should call private secretary, to the Prince; and it was accorded to him. The result very soon was, that either in consequence of the marked talent of the servant, or of the deficiency of the master, the secretary became all-powerful, and the foremost man in Pisa. A.D. 1392.

"Now this fellow, whose greedy soul was continually assailed by thoughts of the sweetness of supreme power, considering that fortune rarely visits the great save by means of notable crimes, put every good sentiment away from him; and forgetful of all the benefits received from his master, schemed to put him to death, together with all his race, so that he might remain in security and tranquillity lord of Pisa." *

By the help of Giangaleazzo and the Pisan exiles, a force of armed men was introduced into the city; the malcontents within the walls rushed to arms; and a hand to hand fight took place on the bridge over the Arno, in which the defenders of the existing government were manfully holding their own, and might, perhaps, have

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 607.

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A.D. 1392. succeeded in putting down the insurrection, if the aged Piero Gambacorti, still unable to believe that his ancient friend and contemporary, himself an old man of seventy, could really be his personal enemy, and persuaded that if only he could come to speech with Jacopo, all might be explained and put right, had not shown himself at the window of the palace, in the immediate neighbourhood of the bridge, and called out to the combatants to hold their hands, and allow Jacopo to come to him.

Jacopo at once assented to this; ordered his supporters to cease from fighting; and privately signing to two or three trusty partisans to place themselves close to the door of the palace, called out to old Gambacorti to come down to meet him, and that together they would at once be able to quell the disturbance. Gambacorti immediately acceded unsuspiciously, and came down. But no sooner had the two old men met at the door of the palace, than Piero was struck down, and despatched by the ruffians whom Jacopo had stationed there for the purpose. The rest of the enterprise was easy. Both the sons of Gambacorti were badly wounded and made prisoners, in the skirmishing which took place in the streets; the fortune of the usurper was in the ascendant; and the instant it was discovered to be so, it became vital to every man in Pisa not to be marked as a supporter of the already fallen dynasty. So the fate and government of Pisa was changed in half an hour, and Appiano, the notary, was the sovereign of the city.*

But such sudden changes, occurring so frequently as they did in the history of the Italian cities, involved, as may be easily understood from the nature of the means by which they were brought about, a total change in the foreign as well as in the internal politics of the community.

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 607.

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Pisa, on the morning of that day a Guelph city in alliance with Florence, was, when the sun set, a Ghibelline city, and the enemy of Florence. A.D. 1394.

Of course it was the purpose of Giangaleazzo that Pisa should not only be in disposition, but in acts, the enemy of Florence. And before the year was out war had been declared by Pisa. But Giovanni Aguto was still in the service of the Republic, ready to defend its territory against all comers; the league for the protection of central Italy against Milanese aggression was, even after the defection of Pisa, a powerful one; and for four years no active measures were ventured on either by Giangaleazzo, or by his protégé and tool Appiano.

But on the 16th of March, 1394, died the doughty Sir John Hawkwood,—the Giovanni Aguto of the Italian historians,—at a villa belonging to him in the immediate neighbourhood of the city. His death was a great and most serious loss to Florence, and the Commonwealth left nothing undone which could contribute to mark its sense of his services, and its regret for the loss of them. A commission was appointed to superintend his burial, with no other directions than that no expense was to be spared in giving him as magnificent a funeral as possible, and devising aught else that might do honour to so valued a servant of the Commonwealth. It was decided, that he should be buried in the choir of Santa Maria del Fiore, the then recently completed and magnificent cathedral of the city; certainly the most distinguished spot that could be assigned to the grave of one whom the Republic delighted to honour. And the celebrated painter, Paolo,—or, as the old writers have it, Pagolo Uccello,—was ordered to paint an effigy of him on horseback on the interior of the west front of the church, as a memorial, until a splendid marble tomb with his great actions carved upon it should be erected over his ashes. The Florentines had soon, however, enough on

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A.D. 1396. their hands to think of, and the splendid marble tomb was never erected. But the painted effigy by Paolo Uccello was duly executed, and has done duty, as the memorial of the gratitude of Florence to the great English captain, from that day to this, as few vistors to the great church on the banks of the Arno will have forgotten. A bier, very richly ornamented with crimson velvet and cloth of gold, was ordered to be placed on the great *piazza*, and all the knights in the city were deputed to go with the bier to the villa where the great captain had died, and to bring him on it uncovered to Florence. The body, vested in cloth of gold on the bier, was placed on the font in the baptistery, which was covered with rich brocades for the occasion; and it was there wept over by the matrons of Florence. Thence the corpse was taken into the adjoining church of Santa Maria del Fiore, and interred with not only full ecclesiastical services, but with an oration, in which some eloquent orator of the time was deputed to set forth the claims of the deceased to the gratitude of Florence. "But to recount in detail the pomp of these obsequies, the number of the banners, and the escutcheons, the war-horses covered with housings of cloth of gold, and the black dresses distributed to his wife, to his children, and to his family of servants, which was not a small one, would be perhaps matter more akin to boasting than to the dignity of history."*

It was necessary for Florence, threatened, and in some degree injured and insulted from day to day by the raids on the Florentine territory of the Pisan troops under Appiano, backed up and stimulated by Giangaleazzo, to select a new general, and provide new forces. And on the 9th of October, in the year 1396, one Bernardone della Serra took the accustomed oaths of fidelity and obedience to the

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 616.

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Commonwealth, engaging to bring with him two hundred lances (three mounted men each), and two hundred archers.* A.D. 1398.

In the spring of the following year, coming events began to cast their shadows yet more visibly before them, for Florence was suddenly startled and alarmed by the news of a destructive incursion of a large band of cavalry, who traversed almost the whole territory of the republic from the Sienese frontier to Signa in the immediate neighbourhood of the city, led, not this time by Appiano, or any of his Pisan captains, but by the Conte Alberigo da Barbiano, a Milanese captain in the service of Visconti. Almost at the same time tidings reached the city, that Giangaleazzo was attacking the Lord of Mantua in flagrant defiance of the terms of the late treaty of peace. So here was war again, and all the work which Florence had done at so enormous a cost a few years ago, was to be done over again. The Lord of Mantua sent pressing messengers to Florence for aid, according to the terms of the league; and Florence sent in haste what troops she could, not being able at the moment to send more, because her forces were engaged in making an incursion into the Sienese territory, up to the very gates of that city, which had harboured and assisted Alberigo da Barbiano in his late inroad, "not so much for the sake of any harm they could do, or any plunder they could take from the enemy, for there remained nothing in the desolated country to plunder, as in order that the Sienese should not be able to boast of having over-run the territory of Florence, without any return having been made to them for it." †

At the beginning of the year 1398 an incident occurred, which led the Florentines to hope that they might be able to break the alliance between Giangaleazzo and Pisa, and

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 631. † Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 635.



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A.D. 1398. thus take from him his most potent means of influencing the affairs of Tuscany, and get rid of a most grievous thorn in their own side. Early in 1398, three commissaries from the Duke of Milan, Paolo Savello, Niccolò Pallavicino, and Niccolò Diverso, made their appearance in Pisa, attended by three hundred lances, and also by a certain Friar Filippo, a doctor of theology, "perhaps for the purpose of giving an appearance of religious sanction to the demands they came to make." Closeted with Jacopo d'Appiano, now an extremely old man, on the night of their arrival, they intimated to him the Duke's wish that the citadel of Pisa, as well as the castles of Piombino, Leghorn, and Cascina should be given up into his hands,—for no other purpose, they assured the old man, than a regard for the common safety of himself as well as of the Duke. D'Appiano, after remaining silent and as one thunderstruck at this demand for awhile, at length replied that this matter did not depend on him alone, but on the leading citizens of Pisa. He would, however, see them in the morning, and do his utmost to dispose them to agree to the Duke's wishes. The commissaries, well aware that this would-be constitutional deference to the will of the people was all mere pretence, but unable to extort any other answer from the wary old usurper, went away grumbling to the quarters which had been prepared for them.

Jacopo d'Appiano was well aware of the imminent danger which threatened him. If his pretence of consulting the representatives of the people had been a sham, the consternation, which had kept him silent at the first communication of the commissaries' errand, had been genuine enough. He had, however, succeeded in gaining some short respite, and the night at least was before him. His first care, as soon as ever the Duke's messengers had left him, was to send for his son Gherardo, and order him

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to muster quietly all the forces he could during the night, and have them under arms in the vicinity of the Palazzo Pubblico at break of day. Then he called together the "Anziani," who were at Pisa what the Signory was at Florence, and told them to assemble at the Palazzo the first thing in the morning, and to send thence a message to the commissaries requesting their attendance to receive a reply to their master's demands. Had they obeyed the summons, it is tolerably sure that they would never have left the Palazzo alive. But either from suspicion of danger, or from haughtiness, they replied to the invitation, that if the Anziani had anything to say they might come to them. But instead of the Anziani, old Jacopo sent his son with all the men at his disposal at his back. The commissaries had come escorted by three hundred lances; and a fight took place in the streets of Pisa accordingly. It was a desperately hard one; but eventually the young D'Appiano succeeded in lodging the Duke's ambassadors with their theological attendant in the prisons of the fortress. A.D. 1398.

And for the while all was well in Pisa. But it was felt that matters would not rest there;—felt not only by Jacopo d'Appiano, but by the Florentine Signory, who, as usual, were informed of all these circumstances within a very few hours after they occurred. Here therefore there seemed to be an opportunity of at least detaching Pisa from its connection with Giangaleazzo, perhaps of turning this falling out among thieves to even still better account.

Andrea della Stufa and Niccolò da Uzzano were therefore sent off in all haste by the Signory to Lucca, to which city, some ten miles only from Pisa, Jacopo d'Appiano, well aware of the urgent need of providing some means of defence against the vengeance of the Duke of Milan, also sent agents to meet them. The proposals of these agents were all that the Florentines could desire; but it was



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A.D. 1398. suggested that it would be more convenient for them to come to Pisa for the ratification of a peace and alliance between the latter city and Florence. D'Appiano meanwhile used the delay thus gained, to put a secretary of the Milanese embassy to the torture; by which means he extracted from him a confession, that the Duke's intention had been, to cause him, D'Appiano, and his son to be put to death, as soon as ever the citadel had been handed over to him. Upon this information, the cautious and wary old man, while he kept the Florentines waiting in daily expectation that the terms of alliance with their Commonwealth were on the point of being ratified, secretly sent off an express messenger to Visconti, telling him of what had happened in Pisa, saying he was quite sure these rascally intriguers, who had come to Pisa with designs against his life, were guilty of a yet more audacious atrocity in pretending that they were commissioned by him, the Duke, to act in this manner;—that he had accordingly cast them into prison;—and that his neighbours the Florentines, having heard of this scandal, had forthwith attempted to turn it to their own profit;—and that there were even then ambassadors from Florence in Pisa, pressing him to form an offensive and defensive alliance with their Commonwealth. Of course Giangaleazzo understood the meaning of all this very well. And the result was, that a new treaty of friendship was formed between him and D'Appiano; the latter at the Duke's generous intercession liberated the prisoners, who had been guilty of the audacity of pretending to have the Duke's authority for their own misdeeds; and the Florentine ambassadors were told that, on mature consideration, the Lord of Pisa thought that it would be better to wait and see, what should be the result of the attempts at a general pacification, which were then in progress at Venice.*

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 639.

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Negotiations for such a purpose were in fact at that time going on at Venice. For the Venetians, having become aware, it should seem, of the imprudence of aiding the Duke of Milan in the schemes of his insatiable ambition, had made alliance with Francesco da Carrara, now once again established in his lordship of Padua, and were anxious to arrange a general pacification. Giangaleazzo, however, less inclined than ever to abandon his designs of universal dominion, though not wishing, if he could help it, to have Venice as his declared enemy, was unwilling to come to terms. The result was, that Venice formally entered into the league which had been formed for the repression of the Visconti power; and very shortly afterwards, "the hardness of the Duke of Milan was seen to soften." * And he consented to a truce to endure for ten years, beginning from Easter-day, 1398. A.D. 1398.

On the 6th of June, Bernardone, the Commander-in-chief of the forces of the Commonwealth, formally gave up his baton into the hands of the Signory, to the great delight of the Florentines, who were tired of the sacrifices imposed upon them by the costliness of the war. But whether war was to be declared, or peace was to be made, the business in hand seemed always to involve the accompaniment of the payment of cash by Florence. On this occasion, not only was the city obliged to pay Bernardone delle Serre, and Paolo Orsini and Giovanni Colonna, whom it had also hired for the prosecution of the war against Milan, the entire amount due for the whole period of their engagement, but they found it necessary to give large additional sums to the two latter as the purchase-money for their promise not to fight against the Commonwealth for a specified time, and to pay the former, Bernardone, a sort of retaining fee of two thousand three hundred golden

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 611.

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A.D. 1398. florins a month, in consideration of his holding himself and his troops in readiness to serve the Republic, if they should need him at any time within the next ten months. From which it would appear that the Signory had no very strong faith in the durability of the ten years' truce, which had been just signed by all the principal powers of Italy.

Towards the close of that same year, old Jacopo d'Appiano died,—died in his bed after all!—at Pisa;—and his son Gherardo reigned in his stead. But it is more difficult for a ruler in the position of Jacopo d'Appiano to establish a dynasty, or secure the elevation of a crown prince to the throne, than to crush the liberties of a people under the heel of his own personal despotism. Despite the thorough-going entirety of the treason and treachery which had raised him to absolute power, despite the accuracy with which his orders to flood the streets of Pisa with blood, and thus lay the foundation of his power on a base of wide-spread terror, had been carried out by a demoralized soldiery, and despite the unscrupulous, unrelenting consistency with which his dominions had been weeded by banishment of all those whom he judged to be capable of rousing a spirit of opposition to his tyranny, it was felt by the heir to this ill-acquired sovereignty, that his tenure of it was a very precarious one.

On considering, therefore, the conditions of his inheritance, Gherardo d'Appiano conceived the notion, that he could do no better with it, than sell it to the Duke of Milan, of whose strong desire to possess it he was so well aware. It is to be supposed that a scheme of this sort, from the time of its conception to the execution of it, by the offer to be made to the Duke, was kept as close a secret as possible. But it could not be kept secret from the ubiquitous ears and eyes of the Florentine Signory. The purpose which Gherardo had formed was known in the council chamber of the Palazzo Pubblico, at Florence,

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almost as soon as it had been conceived at Pisa. And greatly were the minds of the Signory and of their counsellors dismayed at the news. "They saw the manifest ruin of the Commonwealth in the acquisition of Pisa by Giangaleazzo in addition to his already overgrown dominions." * Ambassadors were sent off to Pisa in all haste, with orders to leave no stone unturned for the prevention of the contemplated arrangement. Gherardo d'Appiano assured the Florentines again and again, that he had never had any idea of the sort, and begged them to return at once to Florence and assure their fellow-citizens that such was the case. But their orders were, not to stir from Pisa till they were satisfied that all idea of such a transaction had been abandoned. And they were well aware, despite Gherardo's assurances, that there were even then agents of Visconti in Pisa for the arrangement of the matter. These agents wrote to the Duke, complaining that the presence of the Florentines impeded the conclusion of the desired bargain. The Duke sent other messengers to the Lord of Pisa, telling him, that if the bargain was to be made, it must be concluded at once, and urging him to get rid of the troublesome presence of the Florentines. But no hints that they were not wanted, nor formal leave-takings, would induce the staunch agents of the Commonwealth to stir from Pisa. At last, Gherardo caused them to be told that "if they did not take themselves off with a 'God speed them' they should be put out of the city in a way that would not be creditable to them." So they had to return to Florence, certain that the dreaded acquisition of Pisa by the arch-enemy of the Republic was about to be consummated.

A.D. 1398.

Hardly, indeed, had the backs of the discomfited ambassadors been turned, before detachments of troops began to

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 614.

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A.D. 1399. arrive from Milan. They were carefully placed by Gherardo in such positions as to make any resistance on the part of the citizens impossible, and then early in 1399 Pisa was quietly handed over to the Duke's lieutenant, one Antonio Porro, who was commissioned to take possession of the new acquisition in his master's name. The price agreed upon between the contracting parties was two hundred thousand golden florins, with the understanding that Gherardo was to keep the town and citadel of Piombino, and the island of Elba, which had till then been dependencies of Pisa.

Very shortly after this both Perugia and Siena, of their own will, gave themselves into the power of Visconti. That these cities should have been tempted thus to barter their birthright of freedom for the inglorious pottage of the Duke of Milan's protection, is a proof of the greatness and ascendency of his power, and a measure of the constancy and patriotism with which Florence braved it, and was well determined to brave it, come what might, to the end.

However, for the moment these acquisitions did not induce Giangaleazzo to break by any overt act of war the truce which had been signed. On the contrary, by the efforts chiefly of the Venetians, the truce was improved in the course of that year into a peace. But so little did the Florentines trust to it, and so much more important as an indication of the policy and probable conduct of the Duke did they deem the acquisition by him of the cities around them, that they provided themselves with more hired troops, and made arrangements with the most reputed adventurers, or "*venturieri*" captains of that day, by which the latter engaged for a certain yearly stipend to hold themselves in readiness to come to the assistance of the Commonwealth with a certain number of men, if the city should have need of their services.

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Perhaps this lull in the state of warfare, which had become during that disastrous period at the close of the fourteenth and opening of the fifteenth centuries well-nigh chronic in Italy, was in part occasioned by that memorable outbreak of fanaticism which swept over the whole peninsula in that last year of the century like a moral epidemic. A.D. 1399.

This remarkable phenomenon, which in fact was the inarticulate cry of humanity suffering from intolerable evils, the causes of which it but very dimly comprehended, and the cure for which was still more utterly beyond the reach of its intelligence, is known in Italian history as the appearance of "the White Companies." It seems to have been very uncertain where this epidemic made its first appearance. Some said it began in Spain and Portugal, others in England and Scotland. It seems clear, at all events, that all Europe was more or less visited by the contagion. The experiences of our modern times, when every abnormal or unusual phenomenon is at once signalised, examined, analysed and pronounced on, has not left us ignorant of the nature of such moral epidemics, nor disposed us to regard them as unparalleled and unaccountable manifestations. But the effect produced by this outbreak at the end of the fourteenth century was very great. The "movement," as it would be called in these days, was in truth emphatically such, consisting mainly in the displacement of large bodies of the population. Whole communities left their homes dressed in white, and went in huge processions through the country singing hymns and lauds and penitential litanies. Their theological utterances are stated to have been of unexceptionable orthodoxy, and the moral sentiments they professed and inculcated altogether praiseworthy;—the forgiveness of injuries and the restitution of possessions unjustly held from their proper owners. The excitable populations of the cities, to which

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A.D. 1399. these "White Companies" came, gathering size as they rolled on like a snowball, received them with reverence and fed them liberally.* On the whole, it was much pleasanter to ramble through the country chanting some psalm-tune, and getting out of the occupation a certain enjoyable amount of excitement, even at the expense of considerable exertion of the lungs, and being certain of finding abundant rations provided for one's supper, than to obtain them less abundantly by days of monotonous labour at home. Modern epidemics of an analogous description, though still as ever highly contagious in their nature, have by reason of the spread of knowledge and the wide dissemination of a certain tincture of education, been far more circumscribed in the sphere of their influence than was this great "revival" of the middle ages. At that time all classes of society were almost equally liable to the attacks of the malady; and its influence upon the events and politics of the period was proportionally greater; and even those who were themselves unaffected by it to the degree of taking any personal share in its manifestations, regarded it as a social portent of no inconsiderable significance, and in many cases looked on at the unusual spectacle with an interest not unmixed with an element of superstitious awe. We, the graybeards of the social system, which was then in its salad days, cannot be much excited by the comparatively mild manifestations of the malady in our own day in a body corporate, which is kept continually vaccinated for it by the providence of Exeter Hall. But those who have studied the pathology of such departments of moral science, will not marvel to hear that the most vigorous vociferation of litanies, and the most irreproachable orthodoxy of theological sentiment, were found to be quite compatible with an amount of moral

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Genf. 648.

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disorder as great as if assemblies equally large and heterogeneous had been gathered together for any less ostensibly edifying purpose. And those who are versed in the laws of physical causes and effects, will as little be surprised by the fact, that within a few months of the appearance of these vast ill-regulated, or rather unregulated gatherings, pestilence was once again ripe in Italy.* A.D. 1400.

But if War slunk away for a short interval from the presence of her own repulsive and terrible sister, not even Pestilence herself availed to suspend the action of domestic strife and party jealousy within the walls of Florence.

The aristocratic government,—aristocratic that is to say for Florence,—which persisted in considering as such a constitution under which the highest offices in the state were open to all the higher class of shopkeepers, and even the lowest classes were not wholly excluded from participation in the sweets of power and place—for such was the constitution as restored by the upper classes after the suppression of the Ciompi outbreak,—this aristocratic government had as usual managed the foreign affairs of the Commonwealth in times of extraordinary difficulty and danger with remarkable sagacity, energy, vigilance, and success. But the members of it had been unable to refrain from using their power at home for the more effectual depression and extinction of the adverse party in the state. For they never felt secure from its efforts to return to the exclusive management of the Commonwealth. The "*Grandi*," of whom Maso degli Albizzi and his family and friends were the principal and most obnoxious representatives, were still using bad laws badly and oppressively for the crushing of their rivals, were still detecting conspiracies, and punishing them by wholesale exile and death.† But the ever active jealousy of the Florentine

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 652. † Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 627.

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A.D. 1400. populace was not quieted, nor were even the ambitious men who had staked their hopes of power on the success of the popular cause entirely extinguished. There were still Ricci, Medici, Alberti, Scali, and Strozzi, striving to stir up the storm of popular commotion, that they might ride into the highest places on the top of its surging wave.

Before that year of pestilence, 1400, was over, one Salvestro Cavicciuli, himself a member of a noble family which had in old times been persecuted as such, came secretly to the Signory, and with much talk about the cruelty of his position, which compelled him either to betray the friends who had trusted him, or to become a traitor to Florence, proceeded to reveal a conspiracy to upset the present government and constitution. He specially criminated Sanminiato de' Ricci and Tommaso de' Davizi as ringleaders in the plot. Sanminiato was arrested the same evening, brought to the Palace, and in the course of that winter's night—(it was near the close of 1400)—"put most severely to the torture, in the presence of the Podestà, the board of Eight who superintended the administration of criminal justice, and several of the Signory. On the following night he was placed on the rack a second time. The first agony wrenched from him the confession of the truth of the charge against him; the second succeeded in extracting the names of a number of accomplices. On the next day Tommaso de' Davizi, who had been at Bologna on business connected with the conspiracy, was returning to Florence in company with Piero Benini, a remarkably handsome lad of barely seventeen, whose companionship with the conspirator is explained by the old historian in very clear terms, which I think it well to refer to in preference to quoting them.* At the gate they became acquainted with the fact of Sanminiato's arrest, and

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Gonf. 656.

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instantly turning their horses' heads, rode for their lives back by the road they had come. Hotly pursued, they were not overtaken till they had reached Barberino, a little town in the hills behind Prato, eighteen miles from Florence, on the then road to Bologna. There they were both captured and brought back to Florence, where two days afterwards Davizi was beheaded; and the young Benini pardoned in consideration of his age, and of his having been led to join the conspiracy entirely by Davizi. The latter made under torture considerable additions to the list of persons incriminated, already furnished by Sanminiato de' Ricci; and the results of the incriminations thus obtained were the most important part of the consequences of the conspiracy and its discovery. The entire family of the Medici, almost all the Ricci, most of the Alberti, and many of the Strozzi, Scali, Adimari, and Altoviti were declared rebels, to the number in all of sixty individuals.* A.D. 1401.

The informer Salvestro, who had revealed the existence of the conspiracy to the Signory, was made a knight; a coat of arms was assigned to him by the city; and a special permission was accorded to him and his sons to carry arms in Florence. The interest of five thousand golden florins was settled on him for life; and he was made Podestà of Prato for a year.

So the actual government and the Albizzi were more secure in their ascendency than before; but there were certain circumstances connected with the revelations that had been made in connection with this conspiracy, that seemed to warrant the belief that Giangaleazzo had not been entirely ignorant of it. And there were other concurrent reasons for anxiety in Florence with respect to his movements, although he had in no wise as yet broken the conditions of the peace.† These disquietudes grew yet

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Gonf. 656. † Ammirato, lib. xvi. Gonf. 660.

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A.D. 1402. more grave when it became known at Florence in the month of September, that Visconti had induced the Marchese di Ferrara to become his ally, and that he was actively engaged in making preparations and provisions that could only have a renewal of the war for their object. He had been endeavouring too, it was discovered, through Carlo Malatesta, to induce Pope Boniface to desert the league which had been formed against him, and to enter into a compact with him. But in this attempt he had not succeeded. He had raised from his subjects a sum of seven hundred thousand golden florins; he had hired four thousand five hundred lances,—amounting, it must be remembered, to thirteen thousand five hundred men and horses;—and a body of more than twelve thousand infantry;—had put his frontiers and his fortresses in a state of perfect efficiency and repair;—and it was very clear that all this could only mean war.

But Robert of Wittelsbach had just been elected Emperor of Germany; and early in 1402 his ambassadors appeared in Florence, where for once at least the representatives of an Emperor were genuinely welcome.* They assured the Signory that the new Emperor was about to pass the mountains animated by the most friendly sentiments towards Florence, and especially determined to curb and put down the tyranny of the Visconti. Of course this meant that his Imperial Majesty of Wittelsbach was much in want of a little ready cash. The Emperors, Kings, and Princes always did begin to feel animated by sentiments of the most cordial description towards Florence in similar circumstances. But upon this occasion Florence wanted the aid of the Imperial fighting power as much as the Emperor wanted the Florentine golden florins. So there was no difficulty in coming to an arrangement, that on

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 657.

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Robert of Wittelsbach undertaking to march into Italy in the course of the ensuing September, or at the latest by the middle of October, with a powerful army for the "defeat and deposition" of the Duke of Milan, and "not to hold his hand till the work was done," the Commonwealth of Florence should pay to his Majesty two hundred thousand florins, and lend him, if he needed it, two hundred thousand more.* A.D. 1402.

The Emperor did march across the mountains accordingly, and in the latter half of October was in the neighbourhood of Brescia; where in a battle brought on by a chance meeting of some of the Imperial troops with a party of Visconti's men under Facino Cane, the Germans were so thoroughly defeated, that two of the leaders of the Imperial army, the Archbishop of Cologne and the Duke of Austria, took fright, and, alleging some futile excuse, returned with their forces to Germany; and the Emperor was obliged to withdraw to Trent.

"Truly," exclaims the Florentine historian in amusingly emphatic disgust at this disappointment, "there is nothing on the face of the earth so contemptible as an apparent greatness, which rests only on the opinion of others, and on no real qualities of its own!" In fact, the news of this defeat produced so great a consternation in Florence, that many were persuaded that that was the last year of Florentine liberty. By the attitude recently assumed by the Commonwealth towards the Emperor, and by the nature of the convention between them, it was felt that as between Florence and Visconti the sword had not only been drawn but the scabbard thrown away. It was now war to the uttermost between these two representatives of opposing principles and social systems. And if the Imperial ally whose aid they had purchased so dearly could do no better for them than seemed likely from this commencement, there

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 660.

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A.D. 1402. was absolutely nothing to prevent the army of Visconti from overrunning Tuscany and taking possession of Florence forthwith.

Some degree of calm and confidence was restored to the city towards the end of November by the news that the Emperor did not mean to give up all for lost as yet, but had returned southwards, and was then at Padua, in the friendly territory of Francesco da Carrara. Nevertheless it soon became apparent that little or nothing was to be hoped for from Imperial aid. It is remarkable, throughout the whole course of mediæval history, how small an amount of power the German Emperors were able to exercise on the southern side of the mountains. The conduct of Robert of Wittelsbach was but a repetition of what his predecessors had done again and again. As soon as he had obtained all the money he could squeeze out of the fratricidal quarrels of the Italians, he found that it was high time to return to Germany.

In the spring of 1402 he sent his nephew Louis of Bavaria to Florence "to consult the Signory as to the best means of gathering together a sufficient army to confront the forces of the Duke of Milan." Florence was so disgusted, that it was as much as ever the citizens could do to maintain their usual courtesy to princely visitors. They had found out that the Emperor was of no use at all; and now they perfectly well understood that this visit was only a sending round of the Imperial cap for some more money. As if it were not his Majesty's business, rather than theirs, to know how to collect a sufficient army for the work he had undertaken to do! So the citizens, while bowing low to the Imperial visitor, carefully buttoned up their pockets; and he was given to understand that beyond what she had already undertaken to do, Florence could not advance another penny.*

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 664.

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Whereupon the Emperor, on the 15th of April, turned his face northwards, and left Padua on his homeward march, grumbling and abusing the Florentines, and saying that he should know how to come to help them another time;—much after the manner of a nineteenth-century cabman to whom a sum double the amount of his fare has been refused. A.D. 1402.

In the meantime, the Commonwealth had been making a close offensive and defensive league with Bologna, of which city Giovanni Bentivoglio was now lord, having been made such a year or two previously by the unanimous decision of the inhabitants. It was all that remained to be done; for other help there was none, save the small and altogether insufficient force that Francesco da Carrara could bring into the field. On the 26th of June a battle was fought in the neighbourhood of Bologna by the forces of the two cities and those of the lord of Padua on the one side, and the troops of Visconti under Alberico da Barbiano on the other. Though the former were grievously outnumbered, the struggle was a long and hardly-contested one, resulting in a larger loss of life than was usually the case in the comparatively bloodless battles of those days. But victory was on the side of the invader. Giovanni Bentivoglio was killed, and Bologna fell into the hands of Visconti.*

Great was the dismay and terror in Florence when the news of the total rout of the army and of the fall of Bologna reached the city. It was neither more nor less than the fall, as the historian says, of the fortress which was the bulwark of Florence. Now she lay absolutely open to the invader. "Her soldiers were destroyed, her general and her captains made prisoners, her money at an end; no hope of the possibility of raising up some other foreign prince against the Visconti; and a victorious hostile

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Gonf. 665.



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A.D. 1402. army, that might be expected any hour, at the gates of Florence!" Never since the days of Henry of Luxembourg had the Republic been in such danger. The helpless Signory in the Palace gazed despairingly in each other's blank faces, and found neither counsel nor comfort anywhere. In the streets the frightened citizens ran to and fro, or gathered in anxious knots in the piazzas and under the porticos, calculating how many hours might pass before the vanguard of the Milanese army would be at the defenceless gates of the city.

Fortunately for Florence the invader did not judge it prudent to be in too great a hurry to push on to the ultimate consequences of his success. Probably he found it necessary to secure more firmly his footing in Bologna, a high-spirited city, in which every man, woman, and child was his deadly enemy, before leaving it behind him. And Florence had thus a breathing space allowed her, during which, however, she could do little else than await the coming blow in trembling expectation.

The arch-enemy himself, Giangaleazzo, was in Padua the while; and that summer there was also in Padua—the pestilence!

Ah! now if our black Virgin of Impruneta,—she to whom Florence has always for centuries past recurred in her urgent needs,—she who gives us ever rain after long drought, and returning sunshine after seasons of flood,—if she would only exert herself! Now or never is the time for our goddess to help us! Such a chance, too, with the plague at our door! Surely she might easily assist us!

But no! The monster won't stay in Padua to face the pestilence! He is off to a place of safety, a deliciously secluded villa, called Marignano, in the lovely valley of the Ambro; amusing his temporary leisure there by superintending, report says, the manufacture of a splendid crown, fit for the king of Italy!

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But what is this sudden running to the Palazzo one morning early in September;—running of every man whose position gives him right of access to the Signory,—running not as in happier days with arms in their hands intent on civil broil—(Florentines are all united now!)—but every man with anxious inquiring eyes and quivering lips? What is the whisper that begins gradually to obtain circulation in the city? A.D. 1402.

There is a report, a mere rumour far too good to be true!—impossible to say, indeed, whence it came, or how it arose,—but there *is* a rumour that the atrocious tyrant had left the pest-stricken city too late . . . . that he had carried with him to his safe cool retreat the fate he fled from,—that Nemesis had sat behind him as he rode too slowly from the Paduan lazar-house!

A few days yet of almost intolerable suspense, and then before the second week of September has run out, one sultry afternoon at the siesta hour,—for those who can sleep away the hours in Florence,—there is a clattering of hoofs along the street leading from the Prato gate! A horseman, staggering in the saddle with the heat and extreme fatigue, is urging a foaming and fast-failing horse towards the Piazza. A letter for the Signory! News! great news! Florence is saved! The tyrant is dead! Dead! struck down in his place of safety, and in his prime, on the third of this month of September!

More rapidly than any wild-fire the tidings spread through all the city. In an instant all Florence was in the street, and a shout of joy went up in one massed body of sound, the like of which had rarely been heard within those or any other walls! For rarely have the people of a large city been so one-minded in any powerful feeling, as were the Florentines in exultation at their unexpected deliverance.

Once before, in that other time of extreme danger from



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A.D. 1402. Henry of Luxembourg, the Commonwealth had been saved by the timely death of the enemy;—though Florence had not then been unanimous in her rejoicing over the vouchsafed mercy;—and now, lo! again, in our hour of direst need, a hand more powerful than that of emperor or autocrat is stretched out to save us. Surely the stars in their courses fight on our side! Men fell on each other's necks in the streets! Tears of joy ran down their cheeks! A roar of confused voices, asking and answering questions, congratulating, laughing, shouting, singing apposite fragments of psalms and lauds, filled all the streets. Great is the Virgin of the Impruneta!—our own black Madonna, who has prevailed over all the madonnas and the saints of the enemy! Often and often during that day, says the historian, were heard in Florence the words of the Psalmist, "We are escaped as a bird out of the hand of the fowler! The net is broken, and we are escaped!"

"This," writes Ammirato, "was, in the fifty-fifth year of his age, the end of Giangaleazzo Visconti, who for twelve years, sometimes with a doubtful peace, sometimes with a treacherous truce, and sometimes with open warfare, had tormented the Commonwealth of Florence. And this most powerful potentate found in the Florentines the main obstacle to his design of making himself sovereign of Italy. And it was deemed both at that day and ever since a most notable and marvellous thing that one single city, possessing no sea-port, and no military forces, unprotected by mountain barriers or by great rivers, should have been able to resist so great a power, by no other means save the industry of its inhabitants and . . . . ready cash." *

* Ammirato, lib. xvi. Conf. 667.

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## CHAPTER VI.

The sons of Giangaleazzo Visconti—Florence leagues with the Pope for the recovery of the Visconti usurpations—State of things in Pisa—Attempt of the Florentines to oust Gabriello-Maria Visconti from Pisa—Fails—Visconti seeks French support in Genoa—Dispute with Bucicault, the French governor at Genoa—Truce with Gabriello-Maria—The Visconti governor driven out of Siena—Peace between Florence and Siena—Reduction of feudal chieftains in the Apennines—Gherardo d'Appiano dies—Many feudal Signors apply for the protection of Florence—Ambassadors from Antipope Benedict in Florence—Antipopes—Death of Pope Boniface—Ambassadors from Pope Innocent in Florence—French embassy to Florence—Policy of Florence with regard to the Antipope—Intrigues between Bucicault and the Antipope—Francesco da Carrara—Florentine agent at Genoa—Gino Capponi sent to Genoa—His negotiation with Bucicault—Interview between Maso degli Albizzi and Gabriello-Maria—Pisa rises in insurrection—Gabriello-Maria assisted by the French—He leaves Pisa—Gino Capponi sent to Sarzana to meet Gabriello-Maria and Bucicault—Niccolò Barbadori sent to Genoa—Terms of agreement between them for the delivery of Pisa to Florence—Gino Capponi takes possession of the citadel—Gino Capponi at Ripafratta—The Pisans get possession of their city—and send a remonstrance to Florence—Determination of Florence to have Pisa—Siege of Pisa—Cruel conduct of Florence—Extreme distress in Pisa—Capitulation—Discord between the Florentine captains—Takes possession of Pisa—Great rejoicings in Florence.

The premature death of Giangaleazzo Visconti was a blow fatal, at least for a long time, to the exorbitant power of that ambitious and dangerous family. In the first place, the states of which he died possessed had to be divided among his three sons; and in the next place, only one of these, a natural son, named Gabriello-Maria, was of an age to be at all formidable to the Florentines, or capable of supporting the interests of the family. And to him, as a natural son, fell only the outlying and recently acquired

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A.D. 1403. dominion of Pisa. The other two sons of Giangaleazzo, Gianmaria and Filippo, between whom the other possessions of their father were divided, were both under fifteen years of age. The Florentine Signory, therefore, looking at this state of things, and being of opinion that the recently built-up fabric of the greatness of the family would in all probability fall to pieces yet more rapidly than it had been erected, passed quickly from a state of relieved thankfulness for the prospect of being left at peace, to a temper inclined to aggression and to the hope of obtaining for themselves and for the other states which had been plundered complete restitution of all Giangaleazzo's gains.*

The first step taken with this view was to renew and draw closer the league with Pope Boniface IX. It was arranged that for the objects of the confederates Florence should provide two thousand lances, and the Pope one thousand five hundred, and that the first place in the league should be reserved for Ladislaus, King of Naples, if he should think fit to enter it. Francesco da Carrara and the Este princes were also members of the league.

The first object of the Florentines was to put down and punish certain small feudal lords of the Apennines, who, encouraged by the straits to which the great democratic Commonwealth, the natural and traditionary foe of all their race, had recently been reduced, had been guilty of various acts of outrage and rebellion against the authority of the Signory. This work was very soon accomplished, and then the army of the league set to work to reduce Perugia. That city which, it will be remembered, had disregarded all the advice and overtures of Florence for the maintenance of its independence as a free city, which should owe no fealty to either Pope or Duke, had given itself up to Visconti; and now Florence, no longer with

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Gonf. 667.

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the offer of freedom in her hand, was about to punish this folly and servility which had rejected freedom when it was attainable, by helping to reduce the Umbrian city under the dominion of the Pope. A.D. 1403.

Bologna also was soon recovered, not however to the Bentivoglio family, but to the Church, by the aid of whose troops it was rescued from the dominion of the Visconti.*

When thus much had been accomplished towards reducing the overgrown power of the house of Visconti, the Pope and the other members of the league thought that enough had been done, and were content to break up the league and make peace with Milan. Not so, however, the Florentines. Pisa was still in the hands of Gabriello-Maria Visconti; and it was not to be supposed that Florence would acquiesce quietly in such a state of things. The new tyrant, who had come accompanied by the lady Isabella Montegacia, his mother, to take possession of his inheritance, had begun at once to play into the hands of his irreconcileable enemies the Florentines, by making himself thoroughly hated by his new subjects. Plunder appeared to be the end and object of his government. Arrests on futile pretexts,—pretended treasons and plots, and such-like accusations,—were constantly made; a few obscure wretches, from whom nothing could be extracted, were put to death, as a hint to their richer fellow-citizens; and fines, measured only by their ability to pay, were extorted from the latter. It has been recorded, that from one single citizen—a certain Bartolommeo di Scorno—the tyrant took twenty-five thousand golden † florins.

Florence watched these things with grim satisfaction. There was quite enough of the old traditional hatred remaining between the two great representative cities of Guelphism and Ghibellinism, to make Florence very com-

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Conf. 673. † *Ibid.*, lib. xvii. Conf. 674.

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A.D. 1404. fortably indifferent to the amount of suffering inflicted on the Pisans by the stranger tyrant into whose hands they had fallen; but they calculated the effect of them on the temper of the citizens, with the eye of an anatomist curiously watching the effect of torture on the nervous system of a living creature beneath his knife.

At last, in the first months of 1404, it was thought in Florence that the fruit was ripe, and that the time was come for putting out a hand to gather it. A body of troops therefore were collected with great secrecy in the neighbourhood of Sanminiato, a great quantity of machines for taking the city by assault were ordered to be made by "one Domenico, a most ingenious fabricator of instruments of war," and when all was ready, the expedition marched to the gates of Pisa under the command of the Conte Bettoldo Orsini, a *Venturiere* captain in the Florentine service, accompanied by Filippo de' Megalotti, Rinaldo de' Gianfigliazzi, and Maso degli Albizzi, in the character of commissaries of the Commonwealth. For though we have every confidence in the honour and fidelity of our general, you see, it is always well to be on the safe side. And in a matter of receiving possession of a city . . . these nobles with old feudal names . . . we know the ways of them! An Orsini might be as bad in Pisa as a Visconti . . . So . . . We might as well send some of our own people to be on the spot! The three commissaries therefore accompanied the Florentine general to Pisa.

But the attempt was premature. It would have been a question whether, under pressure of any amount of tyranny and ill usage, Pisa would have deemed deliverance from it worth having at the price of owning the Florentines as their suzerains. As it was, news of the intended attack had reached Pisa; the city was found well guarded; and "those who had the conduct of the enterprise, thought fit to make the district around Pisa pay for the scoffing their

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fruitless excursion had brought on them." * So, many homesteads in the Pisan territory were harried, and many prisoners and much cattle carried off, in order that the mortified vanity of the leaders, who had laid themselves open to ridicule by their baulked attempt, might be soothed by the consciousness of inflicting at least some misery, if not on the Pisans themselves, still on the wretched peasants their subjects. A.D. 1404

This attempt had the effect of opening the eyes of Gabriello-Maria to the expediency of seeking support in some quarter, if he hoped to be able to hold his present position long. Now the French were at that time in possession of Genoa, where the French king was represented by Jean Le Maingre, Maréchal de Bucicault, known in the pages of the Italian historians as "Bucicaldo." Gabriello-Maria therefore made overtures to the Frenchman, offering to make over to the French king, Leghorn and its fortress, then a dependency of Pisa, as the price of his protection against any enemy. He promised also, for himself and his successors, that they should become vassals of the king of France, paying for ever a yearly tribute of a war-horse and a trained falcon. Bucicault agreed to these terms on behalf of his master; and signified to Florence, which considered itself to be on terms of friendship with France, that if they for the future committed any offence against Pisa, he should be obliged to consider it an offence against France.

Florence was very sorry to hear that; declared she had not the least wish to offend France in any way,—quite the contrary; but as to imagining that they were going to permit a Lombard tyrant quietly and permanently to establish himself as lord of Pisa, that was quite out of the question. And they sent Buonaccorso Pitti to Genoa to point out to Messer Bucicaldo the unreasonableness of his

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Gonf. 675.

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A.D. 1404. demands. The Frenchman, however, replied to the Florentine remonstrances by suddenly laying an embargo on all the Florentine goods at that time in Genoa, which amounted to one hundred and fifty thousand golden florins; so that in order to avoid losing all that property, the Commonwealth were obliged to make truce with Gabriello-Maria.

The Florentines had not the slightest intention of considering the matter as thus permanently settled; but the truce with Pisa left them at liberty to attend to the affairs of Siena, which was already tired of its allegiance to the Visconti. In the present condition of the affairs of that family, committed to the guidance of two minors, and to the untrustworthy hands of several unscrupulous chieftains, their father's generals, vassals, or allies, the Sienese saw a good opportunity for escaping from the humiliating position which they had been led by hatred and jealousy of Florence to make for themselves. Having got rid, therefore, of the Milanese governor who resided in the city as representative of the Visconti, without striking a blow,—in so hopeless and depressed a condition did the affairs of his masters appear to that officer,—the Sienese sent ambassadors to Florence to ask for peace with the great Guelph community. There was, however, a very sore feeling in Florence against Siena. It was felt that that city had acted very badly;—that it had been guilty not only of offence against Florence, but of treason to the cause of liberty and to Tuscany. And there was a strong feeling in the Florentine council-chamber in favour of refusing the pardon asked of them, and using the forces which had been prepared to act against Pisa, but which were now left disposable by the truce with Gabriello-Maria, for the purpose of chastising Siena.* But eventually more generous

*. Ammirato, lib. xvii. Gonf. 676.

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and more prudent counsels prevailed, and the Sienese were pardoned and admitted to the good graces of the Signory. A.D. 1404. The conditions were that the Sienese should drive out of every fortress, town, or place of any kind, every Milanese official, lieutenant, vicar, or governor whatever; to assist them in which work Florence undertook to lend them, at her own cost, two hundred lances; that every escutcheon, ensign, coat-of-arms, or symbol of whatever kind, belonging to the Visconti, should be removed from every building or other place, whether public or private, within the territory of Siena; that all money having any Visconti effigy, arms, or superscription, should be recalled and cancelled. It was required further, that Siena should solemnly promise and undertake never again to submit herself voluntarily to any prince, whether secular or ecclesiastical, but ever to live under a free popular government. A number of stipulations followed, regulating the mutual cession of sundry places which each had in the course of the recent hostilities taken from the other. But it was agreed that Montepulciano, which had so often in times past been a bone of contention between the two republics, should be henceforth under the dominion of Florence. The Florentines further promised that for the next five years they would use the port of Telamone, which belonged to Siena, exclusively for all their export trade. This involved the transit of all the Florentine goods though the city of Siena, and was a most important advantage to that place. But it was easy for the Florentines to grant the Sienese that privilege in the present state of their relations with Pisa.

On these terms, peace with Siena was formally proclaimed in Florence on the 7th of April, 1404.

The next business that occupied the attention of the Signory was the looking after certain feudal chieftains in the Apennines who had hitherto maintained their independence chiefly in that district of Tuscany which lies beyond

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A.D. 1404. the main chain of the Apennine on the frontier of Romagna, and who had taken the opportunity afforded by the recent difficulties of the Republic to side, according to their natural sympathies, with the Visconti, and declare themselves enemies of Florence. Jacopo Salviati was despatched against these,—mainly the Counts Guido and Ricardo da Bagno, and Andreino degli Ubertini,—and very soon reduced them to obedience, taking from them no less than thirty-two castles and fortresses, with the territory depending on them, "which was a great acquisition for the Republic, and considerably enlarged its boundaries." *

Then Gherardo d' Appiano, who, it will be remembered, had reserved to himself the principality of Piombino, on the coast of the Tuscan Maremma, when he sold Pisa to the Duke of Milan, died; and left his heir and his principality to the care and tutelage of the Republic. Florence had not much reason to remember Gherardo d' Appiano or his father with great respect or kindness. But it was decided that the Commonwealth would not show itself unworthy of the trust that had been placed in its integrity and honour, and sent Filippo Magalotti to rule Piombino on behalf of the young Appiano, promising to dispatch some trustworthy citizen every year for the future, according to the wish expressed by Gherardo in his will.

Various other applications of a similar kind were made to the Signory in the course of this year. The Marchesi Malaspini of Verrucolo, and Obizzo of Montegarullo, begged to be received under the protection of the Commonwealth, engaging to send a yearly banner to Florence in token of allegiance, and obliging themselves to furnish troops whenever the Republic should need them;—arrangements which were graciously acceded to by the Florentines, and which are worth recording as indications of the restored

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Gonf. 678.

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ascendancy of the Commonwealth, and of the position it held among the other peoples of the peninsula. A.D. 1404.

Everything indeed had been going well with Florence since her fortunes took that sudden and opportune turn at the timely death of Giangaleazzo Visconti. And the citizens would have been able to turn their attention freely to their usual pursuits of money-making and quarrelling among themselves, content with the state of things throughout Tuscany, if it had not been for that thorn in the flesh, Pisa! From every other spot of Tuscan ground every sign and reminiscence of the Visconti power had been swept away. But a Visconti, though but an illegitimate scion of the detested race, was still lord of Pisa; and Florence could not be at ease while such was the case. Pisa in the hands of a Lombard tyrant, was not only an eyesore and a disgrace, but a standing menace, pregnant with future danger to Tuscany and its free governments.

This trouble about Pisa was the chief preoccupation of the Florentine government, which phrase the reader will have learned by this time to understand as comprising in one way or other,—as members of one of the numerous boards, or "balie," or at least as one of the invited, "*vichiesti*," assembled to deliberate on every important question,—nearly every tolerably well-to-do citizen, save the leaders of the party in opposition; when ambassadors from the Antipope Benedict arrived in the city towards the end of August, 1404.

There had been, it should be explained, a succession of Antipopes ever since the restoration of the Holy See to Rome, after its "Babylonish captivity" at Avignon, by Urban VI., to the great scandal of Europe, and grief of all good churchmen. Now the Florentines, in accordance with their old Guelph sympathies, and the traditions of a time when the Church was considered in Italy the natural

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A.D. 1404. opponent and counterpoise of feudal power, had always professed themselves to be good churchmen, and mostly behaved as such, . . . . as long as the Pope did not meddle with Florentine lay affairs and interests. Anti-popes were therefore not generally favourably looked on or countenanced in Florence. But at present there were considerations which very seriously complicated the matter, and went far towards throwing questions of good church-manship into a very secondary place in the minds of the Florentine Signory.

The Commonwealth could not attack Gabriello-Maria Visconti at Pisa, because Messer Bucicaldo threatened it with the enmity of France if it did. And this Antipope, who now sent ambassadors to the Republic from Marseilles, was backed by the French king. And if it should appear that there was any probability that by obliging France in any little matter in this respect, Messer Bucicaldo might be made to hear reason in the question of Pisa, why, the Signory were no theologians! Heaven only knew which Pope was the right one! And it would be, at all events, prudent to be civil to the Antipapal ambassadors.

What the ambassadors wanted, or at least what they professed to want was, simply this;—that the Common-wealth should use its influence with the rival Pope Boniface, at Rome, to obtain a safe-conduct for them, that they might confer with him as to what could be done for the putting an end to the schism. The Signory assented to this request; and when after the safe-conduct had been obtained, the ambassadors of Benedict further begged that a Florentine ambassador might be sent with them to Rome, this request was also complied with. But very soon after their arrival in company with the Florentine envoy in Rome, Pope Boniface died.* There was, as

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Conf. 679.

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usual, great disturbance in Rome, and many lives were lost before a new Pope was elected, in the person of Cosimo di' Migliorati, Archbishop of Ravenna, who took the name of Innocent VII. And during these disturbances the ambassadors of Benedict, despite the safe-conduct, and the indignant remonstrances of the Florentines, were thrown into the castle of St. Angelo, and only liberated on the payment of a heavy ransom to the governor of the castle. A.D. 1404.

Innocent, the new Pope, sent ambassadors to Florence, informing the Signory of his election, and trusting that Florence would remain firm in her allegiance to the true Pope. And Florence sent an embassy in return, charged to make all sorts of civil speeches in public, but to complain urgently in private of the conduct of certain Papal officials in the Romagna, who had shown themselves inimical to Florence when the troops of the Commonwealth had recently been engaged in reducing to obedience the feudal chieftains in the Apennines.

About the same time Florence sent an embassy to France, complaining of the protection that Bucicaldo had extended to Gabriello-Maria Visconti, trusting that France would cease from affording him any such support for the future, and (with respect to certain pretensions raised by the French governor of Genoa to constrain the citizens of Florence not to use the port of Telamone) reminding his Majesty that "the sea is free, that the use of ports is not to be prohibited except to declared enemies, and that they had to beg his Majesty to give directions that the Florentines might be permitted to load or unload their goods in whatsoever ports it might seem best to them to do so." *

France in return sent an embassy to Florence. Not much was said in reply to the points which the Republic

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Conf. 680.

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A.D. 1405. had specially urged upon the attention of France; but it was represented to the Signory, that France was exceedingly desirous of seeing the schism of the Church, which had so long scandalized Europe, removed. Of course she wished it removed by the universal recognition of the Pope she supported; and it must be understood that it was intended to make the action of France in the matters respecting which Florence was anxious, depend on the conduct of the Commonwealth with respect to the Papacy.

The Signory replied with cautious prudence that Florence also was exceedingly anxious to see the evil cease, and should consider the monarch who should put an end to it as a great and beneficent sovereign;—but that the Commonwealth was not sufficiently powerful to undertake so great a work herself.

Meanwhile Antipope Benedict had advanced towards that centre of the world from which he was eager to dispense blessing and banning "Urbi et Orbi," having come from Marseilles to Genoa; and was there taking anxious counsel with the French governor Bucicaldo. Their talk together, as they sate in the spring-tide weather of 1405 in the beautiful city looking out over the lovely smiling waters of the blue Mediterranean, ranged over many subjects of anxiety. Pietro dello Luna, the would-be Pope, was eagerly pointing out that if only the adherence of Florence could be secured to his cause, there might really be some hope of seeing the end of the schism. Then the Frenchman observed, that the best help for poor Francesco da Carrara, who after having so long fought an uphill fight against the Visconti, and at last been victorious in it, was now attacked and menaced with the loss of his dominions by the Venetians, might be found also in the support of the great Republic. Francesco was specially beloved by the Genoese, and had always been through all fortunes the *protégé* and ally of Florence. And then again

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about that troublesome Visconti bastard at Pisa! What was to be got by protecting him?—especially in the present state of the fortunes of his family! And the Florentines were sending embassies to the King about it, and making no end of trouble. And really if the Venetians were to be permitted to possess themselves of the states of Messer Francesco, they would become more powerful than was good for the welfare of Italy, and would give umbrage even to France.* A.D. 1405.

Now while these high and mighty personages were thus discoursing "most secretly," as the old contemporary chronicler says, behold a grave and quiet-mannered man, shrewd of eye and close of mouth, dressed very plainly in a long black mantle lined with red, and sad-coloured cloth jerkin, glides into the apartment;—glides in unannounced from some hidden door in the wall, reached by secret stair, or other such precautions against the possibility of its being known that the French governor and his Holiness (*Anti*) were colloguing with any such stranger.

A singularly intelligent face the stranger has! and—now that he puts the hood of his mantle back from it—surely that grave, quiet, vigilant face has been seen many a time crossing the great Piazza of Florence! Can it be? It *is* "our citizen Messer Buonaccorso Alderotti," who "happened to be in Genoa;" . . . . as one of "our citizens" always does happen to be somehow or other, wherever and whenever anything that can interest Florence is being done or said. Yes. Messer Buonaccorso Alderotti not only happened to be in Genoa, but also happened to be present at the most secret deliberations of its rulers! Well, since he does happen to be here, perhaps Messer

* "Commentarj di Gino di Neri Capponi dell' Acquisto ovvero Presa di Pisa;" in the 18th vol. of the Script Rer. Ital., p. 1127. An unusually important and interesting chronicle, from the circumstance of the writer having taken a leading part in the remarkable events he records.



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A.D. 1405. Buonaccorso could say whether Florence would be inclined to enter into the views of the Frenchman and his Holiness if . . . . if . . . . (the words are scarcely allowed to trickle out of the lips !) . . . . if the possession of Pisa by "our Commune" were to be the reward. No sparkle is seen in the Florentine's shrewd eye;—a deprecating bow,—a shrug. It was not for him to know the thoughts of the Signory. But that same night a horseman is making the best speed he may along the dangerous bridle paths which skirt the coast southwards in the direction of Florence. He is the bearer of a very few cautiously-written words addressed to Gino Capponi, the author of our chronicle.*

The few oracular words were laid instantly before the Signory, and it was shortly determined by them, and by "a very few" other citizens called to counsel, that Gino himself should at once go to Genoa on pretence of private business of his own;—that he should then in the first instance see Messer Alderotti, and learn what grounds he had for writing as he had done;—that, if it should then seem that there was ground to go upon, Capponi should get an interview with Bucicaldo, or with the Antipope, or, better still, if possible, with both of them together; and should endeavour to discover precisely what would be required from the Commonwealth in return for Pisa;—how and by what means it was proposed to put Florence in possession of it;—and, above all, whether they who made such promises had the power to perform them.

Messer Bucicaldo made no difficulty in telling Capponi that what he should demand was, that the Florentines should pay to him four hundred thousand florins, a portion of them to be spent in assisting Francesco da Carrara, that Florence should recognise Benedict as Pope, and some other

* Script. Rer. Ital., tom. xviii., *ibid.*

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matters, "which would have been all possible enough, if he had had Pisa in his hands to give." He could only put forward his hopes of having it in his hands shortly. To which the Florentine replied, that no doubt he would soon be the master of Pisa; that it would then be the time to treat of these matters; and that he should, when that moment had arrived, be very glad to hear from him again. A.D. 1405.

In the meantime Gabriello-Maria Visconti at Pisa, whom some rumour of what was going on had reached, and who had already been made excessively uneasy by certain hints, which Bucicaldo and Benedict had recently thrown out to him, thinking that the best thing he could do would be to be beforehand with the kind friends who had determined, as he clearly perceived, to throw him over, himself wrote to Maso degli Albizzi, with whom he was well acquainted, telling him that he should be glad of an interview with him, at Vico Pisano, a hamlet on the Florence side of Pisa.

These men of the Albizzi race knew better than to accept such an invitation without communicating it to the Signory. Many a less important matter of the sort had cost a Florentine citizen his head; for there was nothing of which the Commonwealth was so jealous as of private intercourse between its citizens and foreign princes. But on the present occasion the Signory, with the knowledge of what had recently taken place at Genoa, instructed Maso to go to Vico Pisano by all means. The interview took place. And Gabriello-Maria entered into a long and contradictory discourse, "after the manner of men who are drawn different ways by their desires," * speaking of his wish to form an alliance with Florence for the maintenance of his position in Pisa, and then dropping hints inconsistent with any such idea.

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Conf. 685.



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A.D. 1405. Maso, perceiving how the land lay, then cautiously dropped a word or two of the possibility of a sale of Pisa to the Commonwealth. Gabriello-Maria at first scouted the idea;—would not hear of such a thing;—at all events, would not hear of it till Maso should have returned to the Signory and ascertained their opinion on the question. After that he would talk further with him upon the subject.

But the Visconti had not kept the secret of his errand at Vico Pisano so successfully as the Florentines had kept that of their negotiations at Genoa. Yet he was one individual, while they were many. But like other despots he had a confidant, one Romigi Giacci, a Pisan citizen in whom he placed unlimited confidence. But this Pisan, as it would seem,* was moved by indignation at the idea of selling his native city to its traditional enemy and rival, which was stronger than his attachment to his friend and sovereign. He spread the tidings of the contemplated sale through the city, and induced the Pisans to rise in insurrection against the foreigner who was about to dispose of them like so many sheep in the market.

This rising took place on the 21st of July, 1405; and after a struggle in the streets, Gabriello-Maria, with his mother and his hired troops, were compelled to take refuge in the citadel. His aged mother, in crossing a plank, which gave access to the place of safety, fell (not, as rumour said, unaided by an opportune thrust from some one, who thought an aged princess an incumbrance in that moment of confusion and danger, and expectation of worse to come), and was killed on the spot.†

Gabriello-Maria sent off in all haste a pressing appeal to Bucicaldo for help, which the Frenchman lost no time in sending him. For if the Pisans were to get possession of

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Gonf. 685.

† Capponi, Script. Rer. Ital., vol. xviii., p. 1128.

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their own city there would be nothing for either him or the Visconti to sell! By means of a galley, which though ultimately captured by the Pisans, made three or four trips first in and out of the mouth of the Arno, he threw a sufficiency of troops and men into the citadel to ensure its being safely held for a considerable time. Upon this Gabriello, leaving Pisa in the hands of the citizens, and the fort in the hands of his hired captains, went off to Sarzana, in order to be in nearer communication with his friend and protector Bucicaldo at Genoa. A.D. 1405.

To Sarzana, therefore, the Signory again sent Gino Capponi to treat with him for the sale of his sovereignty. But as it became very clear that the real person who had any power or authority in the matter was Bucicaldo, and Gabriello himself avowed that he could do nothing without consulting him, the Signory sent Niccolò Barbadori, the son of the man who had been so ungratefully and infamously put to death by the Florentines, as their ambassador to Genoa, there to treat with the Frenchman personally. After the loss of several days in chaffering, Barbadori at last persuaded Bucicaldo to send two Genoese citizens, who were known to be Guelphs in politics, and therefore friendly to Florence, as plenipotentiaries to Pietrasanta, there to finally adjust the terms of the sale with the Commonwealth. It was there agreed that Gabriello Maria was to make over to Florence all his rights to the sovereignty of Pisa, and to deliver up the citadel into the hands of the commissary who should be deputed by the Signory to receive it, as well as the outlying fortresses of Libbrafatta or Ripafratta, as it is now called, and Santa Maria in Castello; in consideration for which Florence was to pay two hundred and six thousand golden florins, was to be bound to render certain assistance to Francesco da Carrara, then hard pressed by the Venetians, within an assigned time, and was to be animated by "a firm in-

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A.D. 1405. tention of recognising the spiritual authority of the Anti-pope Benedict."* The phrase is amusing, and would seem to indicate that the interests of his Holiness were rather thrown overboard by his French friends when the matter came to signing and sealing the bargain.

Gino Capponi was appointed to take possession of the citadel, and did so by process duly attested by two notaries-public on the 31st of August, 1405. It was then consigned to the keeping of the hired troops in the pay of Florence, whose duty it was to hold it against the attacks of the citizens, still eagerly bent on getting the possession and sovereignty of their city into their own hands; while Capponi proceeded to receive consignment of the other two fortresses in like manner. But at Ripafratta he met with unexpected delays and difficulties on the part of the governor of the castle, which, as he at length discovered, proceeded from the influence and suggestions of "one Ser Giovanni Malcometto, a bad and astute man, who had been sent in the disguise of a hermit by the Pisans to corrupt the governor."† So "the said Ser Giovanni measured accurately how far it was from the top of the castle wall to the ground, but never told anybody the result of his measurement," as the old chronicler records with grim pleasantry and satisfaction at the remembrance of this exercise of his authority.

There stands yet the partially ruined tower of the dismantled castle, where the traveller may still see it, adding to the picturesque beauty of a very lovely landscape, if he will look out of the window of the railway carriage at the Ripafratta station on the line between Lucca and Pisa.

But scarcely had possession of these fortresses been received according to the terms of the agreement, than

* Capponi, Script. Rer. Ital., vol. xviii., p. 1129.

† Capponi, *ibid.*, p. 1130. Could this bad and astute man have been a Sir John Malcolm?

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news came to Florence, on the 6th of September, that A.D. 1405.
owing to the gross poltroonery of the hired troops left in charge of the citadel at Pisa, the Pisans had taken it, and made all the garrison prisoners.

The tidings caused no little dismay in Florence, for the consequence of this disaster was that, if the Commonwealth was to possess Pisa, it must fight for her and win her by conquest, as it might have done, had the enterprise been within its strength, at any other time during the last two hundred years! And the good two hundred and six thousand golden florins disbursed to Gabriello-Maria Visconti and his French patron were just so much money thrown away. For those individuals had only been able to put the Florentines in possession of the citadel, and that was now lost! The Pisans, as soon as ever they had thus made themselves masters of their own citadel, sent off an embassy to Florence to remonstrate with the Republic on the part they had played in the recent transactions;—taking up arms against a friendly city without any cause of quarrel! They could only attribute to a miracle and to the justice of an all-just God, they said, the wonderful manner in which they had recovered the citadel of their town. They implored the Florentines, as good and friendly neighbours, not to persevere in so unjust an undertaking, but to restore to them the two fortresses which remained in their hands; adding, that if Florence had been put to any small trifle of expense in the matter, they, the Pisans, would be very happy to make it good. "And with these and other such phrases," says old Capponi, "they talked in such a disgusting manner, that every man in Florence determined that he would go naked sooner than not conquer Pisa!"*

* Capponi, Script. Rer. Ital., vol. xviii., p. 1131; Ammirato, lib. xvii. Gonf. 686, who has evidently followed the contemporary narrative of Capponi.

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A.D. 1406. There does not seem anything in the words of the Pisan ambassadors, as they are given by the fierce old contemporary Florentine, either disgusting or unreasonable. Perhaps Florence was piqued at hearing the expenditure of her good two hundred and odd thousand golden florins, termed a trifle, "*spesarella*," as Capponi has it. It was, however, somewhat like the quarrel in the fable. Pisa, though dwelling at the mouth of the stream, made Arno turbid in its flow by the walls of Florence, and the great Commonwealth, which prized liberty so highly that no devisable constitution could sufficiently secure its blessings to all classes of her own citizens, resolved with the fell determination of the unsatisfied hate of centuries to make an end once for all of the liberties of her neighbour.

So troops were hired and galleys provided, and Count Bertoldo degli Orsini was engaged as General-in-chief of the Florentine forces. Nothing more was accomplished that winter, however, save the destruction of Vico Pisano, and the ruin of the wretched peasants and the open country. But Florence was impatient, and began to suspect that her general, Orsini as he was, "did not understand much of the art of war." So his bâton was taken from him and given to Count Obizzo di Montegarulli. In January 1406, too, a new *Dieci di Balia*,—board of ten for the carrying on of the war,—were appointed, although they were not to come into office till the following March, "in order that they might have time to think" what was best to be done.

The result of their thinking was, that it was specially necessary to attend to two matters; the first, that no food should find its way into Pisa, "for the Pisans, if not conquered by blockade, needed not to fear force: the walls of Pisa were strong, and its inhabitants unanimous in

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their determination not to be ruled by the Florentines;"* A.D. 1406.
—the second, that they should not be able to obtain any hired troops. There were two sources only from which the Florentine feared that Pisa might supply herself with these,—King Ladislaus of Naples, and Messer Ottobuono Terzo, a free-lance captain who was then out of service at Modena. So the Florentine Signory made both of these safe;—the King of Naples, by bargaining with him that if he would not meddle with matters in Tuscany, Florence would shut her eyes to what he was about in Rome;—and the free-lance captain, by the simpler process of a cash payment.

On the 4th of March Gino Capponi and Maso degli Albizzi went down to the neighbourhood of Pisa as commissaries of the army; and on the 22d of May the Pisan fleet returning from Sicily with grain, finding the mouth of the Arno occupied by the galleys of the enemy, dared not enter the harbour. But standing off till an opportunity should be found of getting the much-needed food into Pisa, the ships were compelled by stress of weather to enter the river for refuge, and were there captured by the Florentines, to whom their contents were exceedingly welcome; though very far from being of the same vital importance to them that they were to the beleaguered Pisans.

On the 9th of June the Florentine commissaries, considering that the Pisan force inside the walls must be very inferior to that which they had at their disposition,—that is, one thousand five hundred lances and five thousand infantry,—determined to try if the city could be taken by escalade;—that is to say, if they could succeed in in-

* Capponi, Script. Rer. Ital., vol. xviii., p. 1132. It is noticeable, how the old Florentine records this unanimity of the citizens of Pisa, without the slightest consciousness, that the confession is damaging to the cause of liberty-loving Florence.

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A.D. 1406. ducing their troops to make the attempt: for, as Gino Capponi the commissary and the historian of the war tells us, they were very unwilling to do so. Double pay,—the fraction of a month to be counted as an entire month,—an hundred thousand florins to be divided among the troops, permission to sack the city, and the most complete military outfit that they could ask at the hands of the Commonwealth, were offered if they would take the city by assault. And at last the "offers made were so large, and the words spoken so pungent," that they decided on making the attempt.

The escaladers were repulsed, not as it would seem from the commissary's account, with any great difficulty, or any great loss of life on either side. But the loss of the grain-laden vessels, on which the besieged city had depended, began to tell on the citizens imprisoned in their own walls, with continually increasing intensity; and compelled them to come to the determination of sending out of the city all those who were useless as defenders of the walls. But the Florentine commissaries in the camp, with a cruelty of which they would hardly have been guilty towards any, save the people of a neighbour and rival community, determined to permit none to come out from the starving city. "And for a beginning," as the contemporary chronicler * says, in coarser terms of exultation than can be here quoted, they cut off the clothes of every woman, who passed the gates, as high as her waist, branded her on the cheek with the mark of the Florentine *giglio*, and turned her back again into the city! And as this was found not to be sufficient, they cut off the noses of the women, who were still turned out by their starving fellow-citizens, and "hung one or two men in places where those inside the city could see them."

* Capponi, Script. Rer. Ital., vol. xviii. p. 1137.

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Thus driven to extremities the Pisans made yet one other attempt, curiously characteristic of the political condition of the time, before giving themselves up to despair. One morning the Florentine camp awoke to see the arms and ensigns of the Duke of Burgundy painted on the towers of Pisa! And a herald shortly came into the camp, charged to inform the commissaries that the city of Pisa was the property and lordship of the Duke, and to intimate to them to withdraw their forces at once! But the Florentines were not to be frightened from the long-coveted prey, which they saw almost within their grasp, by any such artifice. For all reply the herald, who had ventured to come on such an errand, was thrown into the Arno. The order was, that he should be thrown into the river with his hands tied. But "whether it were," says Capponi, "that those entrusted with the execution of the order were careless, or whether it were that the man could swim with his feet alone," he got safe back into the city; and had the boldness afterwards to come to Florence to complain of his treatment to the Signory, who mercifully contented themselves with telling him to go about his business. A.D. 1406.

All hope being now at an end in Pisa, Giovanni Gambacorti, who, when Gabriello Visconti had been driven from the city, had resumed his position at the head of his fellow-citizens, determined to treat with the besiegers. It was now the middle of September, and Gino Capponi and Bartolommeo Corbinelli were in the camp as commissaries of the Commonwealth. To them accordingly Bindo delle Brache, on behalf of Gambacorti, came out secretly at midnight to treat on the terms of surrender. It was clear enough to the Florentine commissaries that the city was in such extremity that it must yield in any case in a few more days. It was plain enough to see how things were with them, says Capponi, from the way in which Messer Bindo behaved in his quarters. For though at each visit

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A.D. 1406. the Florentine commissaries gave him and his companion a good supper, seeing that they came out half-starved, they were always trying to carry off some bread with them when they returned to the city. "But Gino* each time put a stop to this, saying, 'Carry away as much as you can inside your body, but beyond this you shall not carry so much as would keep the breath in your body for the hundredth part of an hour.'"

But though it was clear enough that Pisa was at the last extremity, the commissaries, nevertheless, judged it best to accord terms. They deemed it more for the advantage of the Commonwealth to do so, considering, that even the few days which might elapse before the besieged were driven to unconditional surrender, might not be without danger; and that it was more profitable to the victors to receive the conquered city in good condition, than to have it handed over to them sacked and laid waste by the soldiery, "after the commission of innumerable crimes and the destruction of property," as would inevitably be the case if it were taken without terms. It is worth noting that the Florentine commissary, writing his account of the transaction for his own justification to his fellow-citizens, bases his motives for sparing Pisa the unutterable horrors of being sacked by the free-lances, wholly and solely on the greater profitableness of that course to Florence.

So it was arranged, that the city should be given up into the hands of whatever commissioners the Florentine Signory might appoint to receive it, together with the citadel, and all outlying fortresses; that Gambacorti should have for himself fifty thousand florins, with the citizenship of Florence, and exemption from all taxes. These terms were to be agreed to by Florence within three days; and Gino Capponi went up thither to lay them before the

* Capponi writes thus of himself in the third person all through his narrative.

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Signory. Returning with them duly confirmed, he found that the taking possession of the city might be a troublesome matter even yet. For the leaders of the different companies of mercenary troops in the pay of the Commonwealth were again (after having been once already, since the beginning of the siege, reconciled with each other, not without some difficulty by Capponi,) quarrelling among themselves, and even if the commissary should a second time succeed in patching up a peace between them, there was danger that they might not choose to submit to the terms of a surrender, which deprived them of the privilege of sacking the city. A.D. 1405.

Capponi, however, called them all together, and having first with infinite labour, as he says, made peace between them, proceeded to consult them about the steps to be taken for receiving possession of the city. And then they were on the point of quarrelling again as badly as ever, one insisting that the only safe plan was to enter by one gate, and another recommending a precisely opposite course. "Whereupon Gino said these words: 'What! when you told us again and again that you could take Pisa by force, do you pretend, now that we open to you any gate you please, to be afraid of conquered and half-starved men? Let us have no more talking. We will enter by the gate of St. Mark. And take good care, each one among you being answerable for his own men, that no disturbance take place in the city. For observe, the orders are, that under pain of the gallows every man shall conduct himself as if he were at Florence. And each one of you shall answer for the conduct of his own people with his own person. So look well to it, and see that our commands are obeyed.' To which words Franceschino della Mirandola answered: 'These are very severe and harsh orders that you give us! Suppose the people rise against us, what are we to do? I presume that in such a case you would choose us to con-

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A.D. 1406. quer, whether with fire and sword and sack, or no!' He had not done speaking when Gino, turning on him very sharply, said, 'Franceschino, we will in no case have any sacking! If the populace or any other persons should attempt a rising, we shall be there as well as you; and will give you our orders then on the spot. So make no further attempts, for we will not have it so!'"

Now considering that among these discontented free-lance captains, each with an armed force at his back, there were such men as a Tartaglia, a Sforza di Catignuola, and others of hardly smaller note, the tone, in which the burgher representative of the Florentine Signory addresses them, is not a little striking and noteworthy.

In the night of the 8th of October, a body of troops took possession of St. Mark's gate, but it was decided that the city should not be entered till the dawn. For the citizens had been kept in profound ignorance of the treaty entered into by Gambacorti,* and both he and the Florentines feared that, suffering as they were from the extremity of famine, the people of Pisa might yet refuse to accept the detested yoke of the rival city.

At daybreak, however, of the 9th of October, the cavalcade of Florentine commissioners and standard-bearers, and the captains of the companies, with "fifty-two" trumpeters, and much parade, and all that symbolism of conquest

* The entire conduct of Giovanni Gambacorti is represented in a very different light by another contemporary chronicler, Ser Cambi of Lucca. That writer represents him as having schemed all along to betray Pisa into the hands of the Florentines. Nothing is known of this Ser Cambi, save that he was a Lucchese citizen, and a leading partisan of the Lucchese tyrant, Paolo Giunigi. His work shows him to have been a violent partisan, and its representations appear in many respects inconsistent with the facts of Capponi's statement. There can be little doubt which is the better authority. But the reader, curious to compare the account of the same facts, as given by the partisan of other interests and sympathies, may find Ser Cambi's chronicle at page 795 of the xviii. vol. of the Script. Rer. Ital.

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which was so dear to the vainglorious childishness of the mediæval Italians, marched through Pisa without any attempt at resistance. The wretched inhabitants, much too near the starvation point for any thoughts of the kind, hid themselves in their houses; and when the soldiers in the Florentine procession threw fragments of bread, which they had brought with them from the camp for the purpose, in front of any house at the windows of which they caught sight of the peeping faces of women or children, "never did birds of prey seize their food with the voracity with which they threw themselves on the bread." When a supply of food was sent to Pisa by Florence, "many died from eating it too voraciously. To one thing I can testify as an eye-witness," writes Capponi, "the bread of which the Priors and Gambacorti ate was of linseed. In all Pisa neither grain nor corn was found. There was only a little sugar, and a little cassia, and three lean cows. Every other thing was eaten up, even to the grass that grew in the streets." A.D. 1406

And Messer Giovanni Gambacorti met the commissioners at the head of their cavalcade, and gave to Messer Gino a large javelin in token of submission, saying, "I give you this in token of the lordship of this city, the loveliest gem that Italy possesses. And now I await your further orders."

And then there was knighthood for any of the Florentine commissioners or standard-bearers who fancied it. And one Jacopo Gianfigliazzi was knighted. And they tried hard to persuade Messer Gino to allow the same operation to be performed on him. But he would none of it; nor was his fellow-commissioner Corbinelli at all more ambitious of the distinction.

And then there was much speechifying. The Florentine commissary made a long oration, beginning: "We know not, O honourable citizens, whether for your sins or for

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A.D. 1406. our merits, God has seen fit to place you under the rule of our Commune!" He goes on to tell them that in any case Florence intends to hold fast to what it has cost her so much to gain; and then goes on to rehearse at length all the evil which the enmity and ill-will of Pisa had in times past produced to Florence. He enlarges on the humanity the Florentine Commonwealth had shown in choosing rather to make Messer Gambacorti a present of fifty thousand florins, and thus quietly take possession of the city by treaty instead of waiting a day or two more till they should have been compelled to open the gates by famine, and so expose the city to all the horrors of a sack by the soldiery. And finally, he points out that the Florentine forces had been guilty of no sort of outrage or pillage, or even extortion, on entering the city; and bids the citizens take care to conduct themselves with equal blamelessness, reminding them that the gallows would be set up in the city, and blocks and axes be in permanence on the Piazza for the punishment of crime, especially for any the smallest and most incipient attempt at any treason against the supremacy of Florence. Then an orator on the part of Pisa, one Messer Bartolommeo da Piombino got up, and first citing a Latin text from the Epistles, proceeded to pronounce on it a fulsome panegyric on Florence, and a confession of the numerous evil doings and shortcomings of Pisa, from all which bad tendencies and evil humours in the body social he trusted the city would be sufficiently purged by the fasting it had undergone, in support of which hope the orator cites a variety of passages from the church services of Lent in proof of the virtues of abstinence.

Thus on the 9th of October, 1406, Pisa passed under the dominion of Florence, and Gino Capponi was chosen as the first governor for the ensuing eight months. Among the other consequences which resulted immediately from

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this great political change, it is remarkable that the archbishopric of Pisa, to this day by far the richest piece of ecclesiastical preferment in all central Italy, was forthwith given to a Florentine, apparently by the act and authority of the Florentine Commonwealth. A.D. 1406.

Infinite, as may be supposed, were the rejoicings at Florence! The Madonna dell' Impruneta was brought into the city as usual on all great occasions of either national rejoicing or national sorrow, and the 9th of October was appointed as a national holiday for ever!*

"Such," says Ammirato, "was the end of the sovereignty of Pisa, a most noble city, whether regard be had to its antiquity, to its power, or to the opportunities arising from its position." From that day to this it has never recovered,—not its former greatness, wealth, and energy,—but even sufficient vitality to arrest it on the downward course. Even to this day unmistakeably, to the most cursory glance of the most careless traveller, it bears the character of a city whose prosperous days have departed for ever. There remain the walls, a world too wide for the diminished town enclosed within them, in the midst of broad, sunny, sleepy gardens, where fragments of ancient masonry and old foundations divide the plots of pot-herbs. Even the railway, our great nineteenth-century nostrum, has not as yet been of avail to galvanize Pisa into resurrection and revivification. It was an important and wealthy centre of civilization before Florence had acquired a place in history; it had far greater geographical and local advantages than its younger rival. It had for a long time that dominion of the sea which is the alpha and omega of a commercial people's greatness. But of the two great political tendencies which were then disputing the world between them it made itself the champion and

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Gonf. 689.



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A.D. 1406. the symbol of the losing one. Pisa went down in the world together with the feudalism and Ghibellinism with which it was identified. Florence inherited from its Guelphism not only the vigour which ensured its supremacy over its rival mediæval communities, but the political and social idiosyncrasies which, even after its tercentenary period of prostration, adapt it to a new course of prosperity and ascendency.

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# BOOK V.

FROM THE CONQUEST OF PISA, A.D. 1406,

TO

THE PEACE WITH FILIPPO MARIA VISCONTI, A.D. 1428.

22 YEARS.



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# CHAPTER I.

Consequences of the Conquest of Pisa—Treatment of Pisa by the Florentines —The Tarlati submit to the Republic; as also other feudal chiefs— Death of Pope Innocent VII.—Consequences of the schism in the Church—Elevation of Gregory XII.—Negotiations for a Council— Gregory at Siena—Anti-pope Benedict at Villafranca—Gregory fails to come to the proposed meeting—Gregory's advisers at Siena—Gregory goes to Lucca—His sojourn there—Florentine ambassadors to him—He cannot be got to meet his antagonist—Intrigues of Ladislaus, King of Naples, to turn the schism of the Church to his profit—Cardinal Coscia at Bologna—Many Cardinals determine on holding a Council of their own at Pisa—Gregory returns from Lucca to Siena—Florence determined to support the independent Council at Pisa—Florence withdraws its allegiance from Pope Gregory—Council of Pisa opened— Ladislaus of Naples is desirous of perpetuating the schism—War breaks out between him and Florence—Unsuccessful attempts of the Neapolitan king—He takes Cortona—The Council at Pisa depose both Benedict and Gregory, and elect Alexander V.—Louis of Anjou called into Italy by Florence as a pretender to the throne of Naples—Louis of Anjou at Pisa—Allied powers, Florence, the Pope, and Louis, leagued against Ladislaus, rendezvous at Chiusi—Successes of the league—They recover all the Trasteverine part of Rome; but fail to gain the other part, held for Pope Gregory and the King of Naples by the Roman barons—Louis returns to France—The army of the league make themselves masters of Rome—Malatesta enters Rome; and the Florentine standard floats over the Capitol—Ladislaus makes peace—Alexander V. dies at Bologna—Cardinal Coscia elected as John XXIII. —Louis of Anjou returns from France—Terms of peace between Florence and Naples—Cortona given up to Florence.

THE social and economical consequences which the Florentines hoped would result from the subjection of Pisa to their government were sure to follow, naturally and necessarily. But this natural development of social laws required a certain time;—a longer time than the impatient Florentines were disposed to wait for the full

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A.D. 1406. enjoyment of the fruits of their success. So various means were resorted to, with the view not only of making the Florentine sovereignty secure in Pisa, but of hastening the consequences that might be expected to flow from it.

Generosity towards a vanquished enemy was not a virtue to be found either in the individuals or in the communities of Italy at that day. It was neither practised nor expected. And it was quite a matter of course that Pisa would be harshly treated by its conqueror. The precepts of Christianity were known and recognized, but disobeyed. Those of economical science were wholly unknown. Had men been aware how entirely the latter coincide in their teaching with the former, they would doubtless have been better Christians; . . . as men have become in such respects since economical truths have been discovered.

A great number of Pisan citizens were banished; a still larger number, with less of evil effect, though still injudiciouly as well as most arbitrarily, compelled to transport themselves to Florence, and to become—under harsh conditions enough at first—citizens of the dominant community. And the depopulation of Pisa was thus commenced. That the void so created should for a while be refilled with mercenary soldiers in the pay of Florence was of course absolutely necessary if the dominant city was to maintain its domination. But in all the quarrels of the old Italian communities insult was quite as dear to the conqueror and as bitter to the conquered as injury. And in the list of the humiliations and sufferings which Pisa had to endure at the hands of the victor, the destruction and obliteration of all sculptured and painted "eagles" is mentioned quite in the same line with what would in our more materially-minded day be deemed far more important matters.* "And," says the old Lucchese chroni-

* Johannis Ser Cambii Chronicon Scrip. Rer. Ital. tom. xviii.

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cler, "when Pope Gregory XII. came to Lucca, as you shall presently hear, no man from Pisa or from the Pisan district was permitted to come to Lucca. Now you may understand into what sort of hands the citizens of Pisa have fallen. For truly one may say that never were the Jews treated by any Gentile nation as the Pisans are now being treated by the Florentines."* A.D. 1406.

But the usual tribute to success and rising fortune very soon began to be laid before the proud citizens of the great Guelph Commune. The Tarlati, the proud and turbulent feudal lords of various castles in the mountainous region which divides the valley of the Arno from that of the Tiber, recognized the supremacy, recommended themselves to, and were graciously received under the protection of the Commonwealth. The sovereign lord of Piombino and his uncle are complimented by being made citizens of Florence. In gracious accordance with the entreaties of the Cardinal Antonio Gaetani, that proud Roman family were permitted to enrol themselves among the burghers of the Florentine Republic. The once powerful Count Malatesta of Conteguidi in the Romagna had four noble sons. But he thought that the best thing he could do for them, when dying, was to leave his county of Dovadola to the Commonwealth of Florence, and bespeak its protection for his family.†

Before the end of the year 1406, in November or in December, tidings came to Florence of the death of Pope Innocent VII.

The great schism which had divided the Church and the political world of Europe ever since the return of the Papacy from Avignon still continued; and the grand object in the choice of a new Pope was to find a man who would have the vigour, ability, and zeal to end it. It was

* Johannis Ser Cambii Chronicon Scrip. Rer. Ital. tom. xviii.

† Ammirato, lib. xvii. Conf. 694, 695.

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A.D. 1406. most important to all Europe, more especially to the Italian States, that it should be ended. For it would be a great mistake to suppose that the evil consequences of thus having two Popes in the field were confined to, or even mainly referable to, spiritual considerations, the scandal of consciences, or even ecclesiastical interests. In those times the lay side of the bifrontal Papal character was entirely in the ascendant. It was as a temporal sovereign, but a temporal sovereign with some specialty about him, which gave him a certain recognized authority over all the nations of Europe, that the Pope and his struggles with the rival Anti-pope kept the Italian world more or less continually in trouble. And the rank to which Florence had risen in the world made it more than ever impossible for her to avoid being involved in these troubles. One of the most important questions for the new Pope, and for all Europe, as regarded the possibility of ending the schism, was what Florence would do, and which side she would take in the matter.

The man chosen by the Cardinals present in Rome at the time of Innocent VII.'s death, ten only in number,* was a Venetian by the name of Angelo Carrero, who was Cardinal and Patriarch of Aquileia, and he took the name of Gregory XII. But a Pope thus elected by a knot of ten men, of whom he was himself one, could not hope that the entire Church and his rival would recognise the validity of such an election. What was wished by all who desired the peace of Europe was that the two Popes should meet in some neutral city, together with the Cardinals their respective supporters, and should there submit themselves to the results of a new election, to be made by the entire body thus assembled. But it can easily be understood, that both the ambitious men who had been elected,

* Ser Cambii Chron. Scrip. Rer. Ital. tom. xviii. p. 877.

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moved by the consideration that half a Papacy was better than no sovereignty at all, were unwilling to run the risks of such a trial of strength, unless each had reason to think the chances preponderating in his own favour. And these chances depended very much, of course, upon the place chosen for the trial. A.D. 1407.

Savona had been named; a small town on the Ligurian coast, a few miles to the westward of Genoa. And the ambassadors sent by Florence to congratulate the new Pope Gregory on his election had orders to press him to agree to this selection.* But it could hardly be deemed a fair one for Pope Gregory. His rival had been elected under French auspices at Avignon; and had been recently among his own friends at Marseilles and Genoa. It could hardly under such circumstances be expected that the new Pope chosen at Rome should betake himself to that extreme corner of Italy, to have his claims judged on what might be called his adversary's own ground. At the time of the election at Rome, the Anti-pope Benedict seems to have been at Nice. And the Florentines sent there also to him an embassy exhorting him to make his own private interests secondary to those of entire Christendom.

In the summer of that year, 1407, ambassadors arrived in Florence from Pope Gregory, begging the Signory to interpose and induce Benedict to consent to the choice of some other place, as he was advised that he could not safely go to Savona. The Signory, in compliance, sent Filippo Corsini and Jacopo Salviati to Nice accordingly, offering Florence or any other city in their dominions, except Pisa, as the seat of the proposed meeting and new election.† And Gregory, on learning that Florence had thus far shown itself favourable to his request, came as far as Siena, in which city he arrived on the 3rd of September, 1407.

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Conf. 694. † *Ibid.* lib. xvii. Conf. 697.

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A.D. 1407. The Signory immediately sent messengers to him there, to hold him fast to his good intention of meeting his rival. But upon his manifesting an intention of proceeding onwards with this view as far as Lucca, he was told that, until an answer came from Benedict consenting to change Savona for some other place, he had better stay where he was. But the Pope's object was to make the Florentines so commit themselves to his cause, as to lead them into a quarrel with his rival, and for this purpose he was anxious to come to Florence. The Signory, however, understanding all this, and comprehending his motives quite as well as he did himself, gave him permission to travel freely through their territory, with the exception of Florence or Pisa. This, however, not suiting him, he remained where he was at Siena.

In the meantime,—September, 1407,—the ambassadors that had been sent to Benedict returned with his answer. They had found him at Villafranca, near Nice; and his first reply had been that he could decide on nothing without the advice of his Cardinals, who were at Savona, whither he was then going. He arrived there on the 24th of September, and calling the Florentine envoys to him on the 26th, he reminded them, with many expressions of thanks for the interest taken by Florence in the peaceful solution of the differences which divided the Church, that when there had first been a question of choosing a place of meeting for him and Pope Gregory, he had been desirous of naming Florence, and Gregory had refused it; and said that as Savona had been now consented to by both parties, as both had solemnly undertaken to present themselves personally there on the 29th of that September, it would be a mere folly and procrastination to change the arrangements now at the last moment. He had come, he said, according to his engagement; and in consideration of the longer journey which Gregory had to make, he would wait

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there for him till All Saints' day,—the 1st of November. A.D. 1407.
He could not believe, he said, that Gregory would fail in his appointment, as by doing so he would clearly show that he had very little care for healing the wounds of the Church.

Pope Gregory, at Siena, meanwhile found it difficult to decide what he would do; and his difficulty was not made less by the multiplicity of friends and counsellors. He was then surrounded at Siena by the ambassadors of most of the States of Europe, who were continually importuning him in adverse senses. The representatives of the Emperor, those of the King of Hungary and of the King of England, and most eagerly of all, those sent by Ladislaus, King of Naples, begged him not to go to Savona, both because it was a place open to suspicion of foul play, and because he, being canonically chosen Pope, had no need to accept any such proposition at all. The ambassadors of the Florentines, of the Venetians, of the King of France, and of the Anti-pope Benedict himself, "were urging him with most instant entreaties all day long," not to fail in "the promise he had given to God and to his brethren the Cardinals, who had elected him." And in the urging of these instances the whole of the remainder of that year, 1407, and a considerable part of the early months of the following year was consumed.*

It is not difficult to picture to one's-self the poor old man, for he was "an ancient man," we are told, at the time of his election, sitting there all that winter in bleak Siena, the butt of the contending entreaties and arguments of all this polyglot band of ambassadors, fearful of increasing the number of his enemies by offending either of the contending parties,—fearful not only of the legitimate upshot of the proposed meeting at Savona, but really apprehen-

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Conf. 699.

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A.D. 1408. sive, and not without reason, of what might happen to him there in the stronghold of his adversary,—fearful also of returning to Rome, where the interest taken by the Roman populace and the ruffian Roman barons in the orthodoxy of their great inheritance and possession, the Headship of Christendom, was apt to manifest itself in a variety of attentions more pressing than agreeable. Truly a hardly bestead Head of Christendom, whose lot had fallen on very troubled times, whose utterances, "Urbi et Orbi," were trumpeted forth with very uncertain tones!

At length, Benedict having in the meantime advanced southwards as far as Porto Venere, near La Spezzia, and seeming thus to give testimony of his willingness to do his part towards the termination of the schism, Gregory, ashamed of his own inaction and indecision, made up his mind to go northwards towards his adversary, as far as Lucca.

The serious things of the world had not yet struck their roots sufficiently deeply into men's hearts to admit of their throwing out blossoms of pungent laughter at the surface; and there were therefore no Punches and Charivaris in those days. If there had been, the rival Popes would hardly have escaped being presented to the world and to posterity in the guise of two mastiffs with chain and collar, each dragged unwillingly and strugglingly forwards by their respective backers, to be set at each other's throats in a deadly contest, which either of them would gladly avoid.

The Florentines did their utmost to bring their man up to the fight. No sooner had he consented to leave Siena and advance to Lucca, than eight ambassadors,—of whom Maso degli Albizzi was one, a Strozzi, a Peruzzi, and a Ridolfi others,—were appointed to attend him on his journey, and pay all his expenses along the road at the cost of the Commonwealth. But already it began to be very clearly

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manifest, that neither one Pope nor the other was willing to lay down so great a dignity. For though Pope Benedict had come forward as far as Porto Venere, and by this approach towards his adversary had seemed to give evidence of his desire to restore union to the Church, yet the modes of communication between one Pope and the other were so little what they ought to have been, that there was small prospect of coming to any arrangement."* A.D. 1408.

The Pope and his suite arrived in Lucca on the 26th of January, 1408. He had now eleven Cardinals with him, six other "persons of quality," (of whom the son of the King of Portugal was one,) ambassadors from Venice, ambassadors from Bologna, and ambassadors from Florence, who were all lodged in the houses of the principal citizens of Lucca, and Messer Paolo Guenigi, Lord of Lucca, made presents of honour to all of them, "comfits, wax, wine, barley, flesh, fish, and abundance of partridges." †

The eight Florentine ambassadors returned to Florence as soon as they had safely lodged the Pope in Lucca. But as the Signory perceived that Gregory did not seem inclined to take any further step, but preferred to remain quietly in the Archbishop of Lucca's palace, consuming all the good things which the old Lucchese chronicler records to have been provided for him, they sent again an embassy of three citizens, charged to use very strong language to the Holy Father. He was to be exhorted, "for the honour of God, for the sake of his sworn oath, for the welfare and spiritual health of all Christians, and for the tranquillity of the Florentines, to lose no further time in doing his part towards the ending of the schism." The ambassadors were empowered to say that Florence would waive her objections, and consent to the proposed meeting taking place at Pisa, if that would facilitate matters. But

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Conf. 700.

† Ser Cambii Chronicon Scrip. Rer. Ital. tom. xviii. p. 882.

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A.D. 1408. they were to give Gregory very clearly to understand that "the Florentine people did not intend to permit matters to remain as they were any longer." They were commissioned to go on to Pope Benedict at Porto Venere, and make the same offer of Pisa to him. He consented to make one other step forward, and come to Lavenza,* if Gregory would come to Carrara. At last he was brought to offer to come to Leghorn, while Gregory should go to Pisa. But to none of these arrangements could Gregory be induced to consent. And besides letting the world thus see that he had no real intention of doing anything towards the desired settlement, he made four new Cardinals in direct contravention of his solemn promise that no Cardinal should be made, till the question between him and his rival should have been settled. This breach of good faith angered extremely not only the Florentines, but also the Cardinals of his own party, who had elected him on the understanding in violation of which he was now acting.

Meantime some of the evils arising from this state of things, which the Florentines were so anxious to provide against, began to manifest themselves. In April, the Signory heard that Ladislaus, King of Naples, had availed himself of the opportunity to make himself master of Rome. And very soon afterwards came a demand from him to the Signory, for permission for a body of seven hundred lances to march through their territories to Lucca, for the purpose of escorting the Pope, who was anxious to quit that city, and who had requested him to send such a force for him. Hereupon a fresh embassy had to be sent to Ladislaus to Rome, to point out to him that the Commonwealth could

* A little town on the coast about seven miles from Carrara. Travellers between Genoa and Pisa may remember the fine old ruined keep there, with the massive-wheeled waggons which transport the marble from the neighbouring quarries drawn up under the ivy-grown walls.

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in nowise consent to anything of the kind; to which the king replied that, as the Pope's vassal, he could not do otherwise than obey his summons; and that unless the Florentines could induce the Pope to withdraw his request, they might expect two thousand Neapolitan lances and fifteen hundred infantry on their territory at a very early day. A.D. 1408.

Then came an envoy from Cardinal Coscia, the Legate of Bologna, saying, that in view of the contests between the two rival Popes, he intended to hold his Legation in spite of either of them, for the Pope to be thereafter duly elected by both the contending parties, and begging that the Florentines would make a league with him for the mutual defence of their respective territories.

About the same time several of the Cardinals of Gregory's party, who had been with him at Lucca, disgusted at his breach of faith in adding new members to the Sacred College, had left that city,* and betaken themselves to Pisa with the intention of holding a Council there independently of either Pope.

All these complications were exceedingly disagreeable to the merchant princes of the great Commonwealth, who did not care which of these rival priests was Pope, if only either of them could be got elected so satisfactorily as that the world might not be disturbed by their quarrelling, and that they might be left to manufacture and sell their cloth, and do the banking business of Europe in peace. And the evident hopelessness of bringing the two rival Popes to an issue, inclined them to favour this bold plan of the dissenting Cardinals for taking the matter out of their hands. Of course both Popes instantly screamed heresy, sacrilege, simony! and began cursing and excommunicating with

* "Fled from Lucca" is the phrase used by Ammirato, which seems to imply that they would not have been permitted to depart from the city openly; lib. xvii. Gonf. 702.

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A.D. 1408. wonderful unanimity; and writing to all the princes of Christendom, to warn them to pay no attention to anything that might proceed from a schismatical Council to be held at Pisa.

At the same time, as the Signory had no longer any desire for the presence of Pope Gregory at Lucca, as it was clear that he did not mean to come to any accord with his adversary, and as the readiest way of avoiding a collision with the King of Naples was to get rid of him, they sent him a safe conduct and an escort of a hundred lances under Ludovico degli Obizzi, to accompany him to Siena. So difficult and cumbrous a matter, however, was it for a Pope to get moved in those days, even from Lucca to Siena, and so great was the universal diffidence, that although Gregory had, besides the Florentine escort, two hundred lances and two hundred infantry of his own, it was thought necessary that Florence should place twelve hostages in the hands of the Bishop of Imola, not to be returned till the Pope should be safely beyond the frontiers of the Florentine territory. He left Lucca on the 14th of June, got to Fucecchio the first night, to Castelfiorentino the second, to Poggibonzi the third (it requires some twenty minutes to do this last day's work by rail at the present day), and on the fourth to Siena; having by agreement left his nephew the Cardinal of Bologna in pledge at Poggibonzi, until the hostages should have been restored.

As for the application of the Legate of Bologna, the Signory, now fully determined to bring the schism to an end without further reference to either of the Popes, saw no objection in acceding to it, more especially as the Legate, who came in person to Florence for the purpose, gave in his adherence to their policy of supporting the independent Council at Pisa.

Towards the end of the year the Signory sent an embassy to the King of Naples to inform him, that they had

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resolved on permitting the Cardinals, who chose to unite there for the purpose, to hold a council at Pisa, and on adhering themselves to its decisions. And the envoys were instructed to induce him, if possible, to adopt a similar course. Ladislaus, however, declared himself to be pledged to Gregory, and would hear of nothing of the sort. Nevertheless, the plan of the seceding Cardinals began to assume a certain degree of consistency. Some of Benedict's Cardinals had joined the seceders from Gregory at Pisa; and the assembly thus formed had sent out letters to the different princes of Christendom, exhorting them to pay no obedience or regard to either of the contending Popes, but to reserve their allegiance for the Pope to be canonically elected by the Conclave about to take place at Pisa. A.D. 1409.

Having gone thus far, and having in the first days of the year 1409 still more decidedly marked their disapproval of the conduct of Gregory, who had left Siena and gone away to his friend and supporter, Malatesta, the prince of Rimini, the Signory began to bethink themselves that it was necessary to take formally the step of renouncing and refusing obedience to Gregory, who hitherto had been to them and to their fellow-citizens the true and legitimate head of the Church. This decided measure, however, though in fact the steps which had been already taken amounted to nearly the same thing, was felt by the Signory to be so large and deeply important a matter, that they were unwilling to assume the responsibility of it unassisted. They called together the great council of the people therefore, and asked for special powers to proceed in the matter. And having obtained this, they assembled all the most learned theologians they could find in Florence, to the number of an hundred and twenty, and demanded their advice. After three entire days of deliberation, this body declared Gregory a heretic and schismatic, and worthy of



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A.D. 1409. deposition from the Papacy as an enemy and destroyer of Christianity; giving it as their opinion, therefore, that he ought henceforward to be called no more Gregory XII., but Angelo Corario. And this opinion they put into writing, appending thereto their signatures and seals.

The assembling of this council and the decision to which it thus came are worthy of notice, as marking the complete ascendency of lay and civic authority, feeling, and sentiment over ecclesiastical at that period. An hundred and twenty Florentine churchmen meet together at the bidding of the lay rulers of the city, and at their dictation or suggestion declare the reigning Pope deposed! Could any European prince or potentate of the present day find in his dominions an hundred and twenty leading theologians who would do as much for him? Assuredly not! And the reason is, not that the Church is stronger than it was then, but that the severance of church and lay interests and sentiments has been so widened, that the Romish priest is no longer a citizen, whereas in old Florence he was a citizen before he was a priest,—a citizen before all things.

Once more before taking this important step the Signory sent another embassy to Gregory at Rimini, begging him to join the Cardinals at Pisa, and assist them in holding a canonical council. In all probability, if he had accepted the invitation, the Pisan assembly would have confirmed him in the Papacy. For Florence would have in that case adopted his cause, and a council sitting under the patronage of Florence at Pisa would hardly have done otherwise. But Gregory had not the courage necessary for taking that step. He said that, if a council was to be held, it was more reasonable that the Cardinals should come to him, rather than that he should go to them; and, in fact, he would do nothing. So Florence declared finally that she

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would have nothing more to say to him;* and signified to the Cardinals at Pisa, that they might begin their council; which they did, declaring themselves to be invested with the character of a representative council of the Church, on the 25th of February, 1409. A.D. 1409.

The King of Naples lost no time in sending ambassadors to Florence to complain of this; and the Signory, wishing if possible to avoid a rupture with him, sent on the 8th of March to beg the Cardinals at Pisa to do something to satisfy the King if possible. At the same time, new proposals had come from Gregory to the effect that some new place should be named at which he would call a council himself, to which, as the Signory informed the Cardinals, no answer had been given.

But the fact was that Ladislaus, King of Naples, was by no means desirous that anything should be done either for the deposition of Gregory or for the full and undisputed establishment of him on the throne of St. Peter. In neither case could he expect that he would be permitted to hold, as was now the case, Rome and the greater part of the States of the Church in his hands. He was little inclined, therefore, to listen to any further negotiations in the matter; and preferred for all answer to make preparations for marching into Tuscany. As soon as the news of these menaces reached Florence, the anger of the citizens rose to war pitch immediately; and thus on the 17th of March the Commonwealth was once more at war.

Lorenzo Macchiavelli was then Gonfaloniere, and proceeded as usual when war threatened to appoint a Board of Ten, whose names show us that they consisted of eight selected from the leading families of Florence, together with "Rosso del Rosso, a baker, and Salvestro, a bridle-

* "Non si impacciar più con lui," are the words of the historian; "not to trouble their heads any more about him."—Ammirato, lib. xvii. Gonf. 706.



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A.D. 1409. maker," according to the usual practice ever since the time of the Ciompi. And the new Board engaged Malatesta di Malatesta, lord of Pesaro, as General-in-chief of the Florentine forces, and took the usual means for getting together in all haste a body of mercenary troops.

On the 3rd of April Ladislaus left Rome, marching at the head of eight or ten thousand cavalry and about seven thousand infantry, and halting at Buonconvento, ten miles or so to the south of Siena, sent messengers to that city to beg that the Sienese would make league with him against their common enemy. But Siena had at last learned the meaning and probable consequences of this sort of invitation, and wisely answered that her engagements would not permit her to enter into any new alliances without consulting her allies the Florentines.

Ladislaus at the same time, not desirous apparently to come to extremities with Florence if he could obtain her support for the claims of Gregory without doing so, had sent another embassy to the Signory setting forth sundry grounds of complaint against the Florentines. They had made a league with the Legate of Bologna, evidently directed, he said, against him; and in consequence of which,—the Legate of Bologna having thereupon taken into his pay a body of armed Perugian exiles,—he, the King of Naples, was damnified to the amount of seventy-two thousand florins, which the Pope had given him leave to raise in Perugia, but of which he had not been able to get a penny in consequence of the above-mentioned conduct of the Legate and of Florence.

This little item of King Ladislaus's bill against the Florentines, it may be observed, goes far to explain the King's dislike to any steps calculated to remove so accommodating a Pope.

And then again Florence had attempted to take a certain fortress called Montecarlo from Messer Paolo

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Guinigi, the lord of Lucca, who was, as they well knew, his very good friend. And lastly, they had set up a schismatic meeting of Cardinals at Pisa. Nevertheless, the King invited them yet once again to forget all these grounds of enmity, and enter into an offensive and defensive league with him. A.D. 1409.

It was replied to all this, in the first place, that the league with Bologna had been made for the necessary mutual defence of the two communities, and was not intended in any way to injure him, the King. In the second place, that it was untrue that Florence had made any attempt to take any fortress from the lord of Lucca, that prince being to that day on very good terms with the Commonwealth. Thirdly, that not only was it perfectly true that they had permitted the Cardinals to hold a conclave in Pisa, but that they would most assuredly do so again if need were, considering how great was the urgency of ending a schism which had lasted for so many years to the grievous troubling of the consciences of all the princes of Christendom, and the scandal and disturbance of all Europe.

As for entering into a league with him, one of the terms of their alliance with the communities of Bologna and Siena was, that neither of the cities should make any league, except by the consent of all the three of them: an agreement which did not exist at the present time.

But as the ambassadors seemed to insinuate that, though these might be the sentiments of the Florentine government, they were not those of the people, the Signory called together a general meeting of the citizens; and, inviting the ambassadors to be present, desired one of the war Board of Ten to give the answer of Florence in the name and in the presence of the people. And this was done amid manifestations of that unanimity of which Florence so often gave proof in the management of her foreign

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A D. 1409. affairs, but which she could rarely attain within her own walls.*

The ambassadors, therefore, were charged to carry back this answer to their King, with the additional intimation, that when he should have withdrawn himself and his troops from the territory of Siena, the Commonwealth of Florence would not fail to do all in its power to be agreeable to him; but that his unreasonable conduct in thus marching armed troops against them without any just cause had compelled the Florentines to take measures, which they could have wished avoided, and which, when it should be too late to remedy the matter, might probably be as much a matter of regret to the King of Naples as to them.

The King, furious at receiving this haughty reply from a community of tradesmen, at once marched his army towards Siena, ravaging the country, and attempting in vain to take the city. Want of food forced him before long to remove his troops from the walls; and he drew them towards Arezzo, doing much damage to the country and the crops, but failing to make himself master of any one walled town. He attempted Montesansovino, and failing there, laid siege to Arezzo, but was soon compelled to abandon it by the Florentine forces sent thither against him. At Castiglione Aretino, another small town in that district, he was not more successful in any respect, except in destroying the crops wheresoever he passed; so that the Florentines nicknamed him in scorn "Re Guastagrano," as who should say "King Cornblight."

But at Cortona, whither he next betook himself, the danger was greater; because, as the Florentine Signory were well aware, Messer Luigi Casale, the lord of Cortona, "a worthless and ill-conditioned man," was on the worst

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Conf. 707.

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possible terms with his subjects; and it was probable that they might yield to the temptation of getting rid of him by giving up the city to Ladislaus. The Signory therefore, with their wonted vigilance, sent off a force of troops to aid in the defence of the city, and an ambassador to support Casale. But in consequence of his utter incompetence and cowardice, they were unable to avert the disaster they had anticipated, and Cortona fell into the hands of the King. A.D. 1409.

But in the meantime the meeting of the Cardinals at Pisa had prospered under the fostering protection of Florence, and had taken a character of greater importance than had at first seemed probable that it would be able to attain. There were now assembled at Pisa no less than twenty-four Cardinals, three Patriarchs, an hundred and eighty Archbishops and Bishops, more than three hundred Abbots, and two hundred and eighty-two Doctors of Theology, together with many representatives sent by the different princes and states of Christendom. So that the assembly might with some reason assume to itself the character of a Council of the Church. This assembly, on the 5th of June, 1409, declared both Gregory and Benedict to be deposed as heretics and schismatics, condemning them as such to the stake.

It is to be supposed that this latter clause of the sentence was added merely with a view to that consistency and propriety which would have been violated if a Council of the Church had not followed up a conviction of heresy by a condemnation to the fire.

The way having been thus cleared, the Cardinals entered into conclave on the 15th of June, and on the 26th declared the Cardinal Piero di Candica "true and sole Vicar of Christ and Pope," by the name of Alexander V.; and as such he has been ever accepted and considered by the Church.

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A.D. 1409. The Florentines were the first to send ambassadors to congratulate him on his election, and to make with him a new league for the recovery of Rome and the other parts of the Pontifical States then in the hands of Ladislaus. It was intended, however, to punish this "King Cornblight" for his conduct towards the Commonwealth much more severely than by merely taking from him what he had gotten possession of by means of the weakness of the deposed Pope and the disorders incidental to the state of things produced by the schism. There was in France one Louis of Anjou, who had some sort of title and claim to the Neapolitan throne; and besides the Republics of Florence, Siena, and Bologna, and the newly-elected Pope, this Louis was to be a member of the new league.*

On the 23rd of July, Louis of Anjou arrived in the mouth of the Arno, with one ship and five galleys of war, which he had hired in Marseilles for the expedition. But though the Signory were very glad to hear of his arrival, and were also very proud of the honour of having the Pope in their city of Pisa, nevertheless they did not quite like the idea of having so large an armed force under the orders of a foreign prince in the city under such circumstances. So they sent Maso degli Albizzi and Giovanni Serristori to the Pope at Pisa, to explain to him the views of the Signory in this respect, and to request him to induce the French Prince to come into the city with one galley only, leaving the rest of his force in the harbour at the mouth of the river. Louis does not appear to have made any difficulty on the subject; but came up to Pisa, and was there hailed by Pope Alexander, King of Sicily (meaning the

* Ammirato, lib. xvii. Conf. 708. See also a "Cronica di Jacopo Salviati," printed in the 18th volume of the "Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani," p. 323, where the author, who, as one of the "Ten of War," had a large part in the arrangement of this league, boasts that the preservation of the liberty of Florence was due to it.

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kingdom of Naples) and of Jerusalem, and also appointed by him Gonfaloniere of the Church. Consultations were immediately held among the confederates; and it was agreed that the first thing to be attempted was the recovery of Rome. And the number of troops to be furnished by each of the allies for this purpose was determined. The quota of Louis of Anjou was fixed at five hundred lances; and that of Florence at two thousand lances, and one thousand five hundred bowmen. A.D. 1409.

The rendezvous appointed for the troops of the allied powers was the little town of Chiusi, on the southern frontier of Tuscany; and thence they commenced their march towards Rome on the 14th of September;—Ladislaus in the meantime having distributed his army in different garrisons on the frontier, specially Cortona and Perugia, and returned himself to Naples to raise troops and prepare for the formidable attack about to be made on him.

The first movements of the allied army were successful. Cetona was recovered to the Church. But, moving on southwards, the army was brought to a standstill under Orvieto on the 24th of September, by the want of provisions, which were prevented from reaching the camp by Paolo Orsini, one of the most famous captains of free-lances of that day, whose feudal estates were situated in that neighbourhood. The cause of his enmity to the allies was, that whereas an expectation had been held out to him of being engaged in this service, he had subsequently been disappointed in this hope. So the commissaries of the Commonwealth, who were with the army, had to sign an engagement with him for seven hundred and sixty lances, and two thousand infantry, of whom the half were to be bowmen. "And, for the greater honour of the King, he was to be engaged in the name of the Church, but the Commonwealth of Florence was to pay the money."*

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Gonf. 710.

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A.D. 1409. As soon as this matter was settled, provisions came in to the camp in abundance; and Orvieto, Viterbo, Corneto, Sutri, Montefiasconi, and many other places, gave in their submission to the new Pope.

On the first of October the allied army entered Rome, and quickly made themselves masters of all the Transteverine part of the city, including the castle of St. Angelo. But the bridge and the gate which gave access to the other portion of the city were so well defended by Giovanni and Niccolo Colonna, by the Savelli, and many other of the Roman barons, who sided with Pope Gregory, and with King Ladislaus, in whose dominions most of them held fiefs, that the army of the league could not obtain possession of it. After many vain attempts, as the wintry season was now at hand it was determined that the army should go into winter quarters, and that Louis of Anjou should return to France to make new arrangements for carrying on the war in the spring with greater vigour.

On his way northwards he had an interview with Pope Alexander at Prato, where he had taken refuge from a suspicion of pestilence at Pisa; and the ambassadors of the Commonwealth waited on the two potentates there, and showing them that Florence had spent on the war during the four months it had already lasted four hundred thousand florins, besides the loss of merchandize captured at sea, to the amount of two hundred thousand more, they pointed out to Louis how necessary it was that he should be true to the engagements he had undertaken.

It was a remarkable evidence of the wealth and credit of Florence at this period, observes Ammirato, that at the very moment of these heavy losses and this onerous expenditure, King John of Portugal was begging the Florentines to permit him to raise a loan of twenty thousand florins in their city.

Louis returned to Provence; but in his absence

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Malatesta in command of the Florentine forces, and Orsini at the head of his free-lances, made various attempts on Rome; and at last, partly by treason within the city, and partly by the valour of Orsini, the troops of the latter got possession of the city on the last day of the year 1409. On the next day, Malatesta, with the Florentine army, appeared before Rome, intending to enter it, as sharers in the victory of their allies, the Orsini troops. But they found the gates shut against them. And to Malatesta's demand that they should be opened to him, it was answered, that he should be admitted at once, if he would enter Rome under the colours of the Church and no others. The Florentine commander, however, replied that he purposed entering Rome with those same colours under which he had assisted to recover Rome, and had acquired so many other cities for the Church;—that he would enter the city in no other guise; and that, if that did not please the Romans, he should know what steps to take. A.D. 1410.

To see the Florentine Giglio fluttering triumphantly over the Capitol, and Florentine troops as conquerors in the city, was a mortification and humiliation as bitter to the Romans as was to the French the presence of the allies in Paris after Waterloo, and one which they would fain have saved themselves. An entire day was consumed in Rome in debating what answer should be returned to Malatesta. But it would have been too dangerous to offend the proud and powerful merchant community under whose patronage the schism had been ended, the new Pope created, and his capital won for him. And on the following morning the Florentine troops marched into Rome, with the Giglio, and no other flag, flying over them; and great was the delight and triumph in Florence in consequence. Processions were made, and solemn services sung, and it was recognized as a special favour of Heaven that the Giglio of Florence should have been permitted,

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A.D. 1411. for awhile at least, to be paramount in the capital of the world.

Ladislaus of Naples, perceiving by this time how unwisely he had acted in seeking a quarrel with Florence, was disposed to make peace. And the Florentines were willing to accord it on the terms, somewhat haughtily dictated, that Cortona should be given up to them, that their losses of merchandize should be made good, and that he, the King of Naples, should promise not to interfere in any way with the affairs of Italy to the northward of Rome.

Having thus opened for the Pope the way to Rome, Florence was very anxious that he should at once go thither, as the best means of finally extinguishing the schism, and discrediting the two other Popes, who still had each some adherents. But Coscia, the Legate of Bologna, for reasons of his own wished Alexander to go to that city; and to the no small indignation of the Florentines he prevailed, as it was to be supposed that a brother priest would. The anger of Florence however against Alexander had not time to produce any results; for he died at Bologna on the 3rd of May; and Baldassare Coscia the Legate, who had been so anxious that the Pope should come with him to Bologna, was elected in his stead by the name of John XXIII.

Coscia had been—and was—the special enemy of King Ladislaus; and it was feared at Florence that his accession to the Papacy, and the close friendship existing between him and the Republic, would have the effect of preventing the ratification of the peace between Florence and Naples, which had not yet been definitively signed. Matters were also further complicated by the return of Louis of Anjou, who, true to the engagements enforced upon him under other circumstances, now kept them, when it would have been more convenient to the other party to

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these engagements if he had broken them. He made his appearance with a maritime force, with which he attacked Ladislaus by sea, in an encounter in which the latter was victorious. Nevertheless, the King of Naples perceived that he had managed to unite too many enemies against him, and had been guilty of a very grievous error in driving Florence to invite into Italy the French pretender to his throne. Louis entered Rome on the 24th of October, intent on making it the base of new operations against Naples; and Florence insisted on retaining, in any terms of peace she might make with Ladislaus, the right of remaining faithful to her engagements with Louis and with the Pope. These lasted, as regarded Louis, till the end of January, 1411. In the terms of peace therefore which were arranged at Florence by the ambassadors of Ladislaus towards the end of 1410, it was stipulated that the peace between Florence and Naples should not be understood to commence till the 1st of February, 1411. A variety of other minute stipulations were added, with the object of regulating, as far as possible, the rather delicate position of Florence between a King of Naples with whom the Commonwealth was to be at peace, and a pretender to the same crown, whom she had invited into Italy for the prosecution of his claim, and with whom also she intended to remain on good terms. A.D. 1411.

There remained still to be definitively arranged the future destiny of Cortona. The Italian traveller will remember the grim old Etruscan city looking rugged and half ruinous on its steep conical hill as it hangs over the post road between Arezzo and Perugia, a little before it comes in sight of the blue oak-embosomed waters of the lovely lake of Thrasymene. Cortona, the seat of civilization and art in the dim times when Rome as yet was not, had still lived on from nameless generation to generation within the huge walls that circle her high peak, while race

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A.D. 1411. after race rolled over Italy in successive waves of invasion. Then, at the slow subsiding of the barbarian inundation,—when city after city emerged from the waters, but was still separated from its neighbours by trackless wastes of barbarism, the yet unreclaimed mud-deposits of the Vandal-flood,—she also waked wondering to the new life of the new epoch. Trusting in the steepness of her strong hill and in the walls she inherited from ancestors whose dust had rested for more than a thousand years in the marble urns, marked each by the torquated recumbent figure of its tenant, and stored in the cavern sepulchres beneath the colossal walls they had raised, she too started on a new period of existence. As an independent social unit, able to hold its own and live its life as best it might among the broils and quarrels of the crowd of similarly struggling units around it,—Cortona obeyed the law of the new time now so rapidly developing itself. That law of gravitation, which whirled the smaller of these units into agglomerations of gradually solidifying social masses around the larger atoms, developed into centres of new political systems, decided her fate. And she was now definitively handed over to Florence, to form part thenceforward of the dominions of the Commonwealth, and to share in its subsequent subjection to the Medici, and their German successors. Now in our day waked once again from sleep by a new trumpet call in Italy, she looks out on a changed world, and finds, helplessly enough, it is to be feared this time, that the eyrie-like perch, which her Etruscan builders chose for her, and the indestructible rock-walls they built for her, and in which she has hitherto trusted, are fatal obstacles to her participation in the new fortunes of an epoch, which makes accessibility and not inaccessibility the condition of prosperity.

In 1410, Cortona, with its strong walls on its lofty crag, was a prize worth struggling for, and Florence came out

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of the war with the King of Naples, undertaken for the laudable object of restoring ecclesiastical unanimity to Christendom, richer than she had entered it by the absorption of an independent community, which belonged to neither of the parties in the struggle. But it seemed as if, winning or losing, conqueror or conquered, Florence always had to pay. All the world seemed to consider, and she herself to act, as if her purse were that of Fortunatus. Even now, when she was dictating the terms of peace to a conquered and sueing enemy, it was arranged that she was to pay, on receiving possession of Cortona, sixty thousand golden florins. A.D. 1411.

The contract was signed in the fortress of Cortona, and possession of the city handed over to Tommaso Ardinghelli, the commissioner of the Commonwealth, on the 11th of January, 1411; and the Florentines, caring little about the sixty thousand golden florins, made bonfires and public rejoicings, "thinking it no small matter, that within five years after the acquisition of Pisa, Cortona also should have been added to the dominions of Florence." *

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 718.

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## CHAPTER II.

Financial matters in Florence—System of forced loans—Legislation to correct public extravagance—New councils created—Quarrels with Genoa—Seaboard considerations begin to be important for the Republic—Florentine ambassadors meet those from Genoa at Pietra Santa—Maritime war with Genoa—Porto Venere gives itself to Florence—Florentine councils compelled to grant supplies by placing troops at the door of the Council-chamber—Peace made on the 27th April, 1413—Conspiracy of the Alberti—Special grant to the Captain Popoleschi—The Pope leagues with the King of Naples against Orsini—Ladislaus makes himself master of Rome—The Pope flies towards Florence—which refuses to receive him—War again with Naples—Feudal chieftains ask the alliance and protection of Florence—"Raccomandati"—Malatesta of Pesaro General of the Florentines—Character of Ladislaus—The danger of Florence—Florence makes a separate peace for herself, throwing over her ally the Pope—Sudden death of King Ladislaus—Death frequently thus favourable to Florence—Prospects of peace in Italy—Braccio di Fortebracci—becomes an ally of Florence—All these feudal chieftains seek money from Florence—Pestilence in 1417—Death of Maso degli Albizzi—Ruin of the Alberti.

COMMUNITIES as well as individuals are apt to regard considerations respecting the cost of the whistles of various descriptions, which they may have been tempted to acquire, from a somewhat different point of view when the bill comes in to be paid, from that in which they placed themselves, when gazing at the coveted object. Florence had treated herself to several whistles lately of a very expensive description. They were exceedingly tempting and desirable whistles, very loud and shrill, and somewhat chanticleer-like in the tone of them; and Florence took infinite pleasure in blowing into them and listening to the music they made. They were, some of them at all events, far

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from unprofitable either for purposes of mere domestic utility. *But* they had been extremely costly. A.D. 1411.

And though the fat and wealthy burgher city was exceedingly fond of playing the magnificent, and when some high-born begging prince of a territory not above a thousand times perhaps as large as her own, came with his cap in his hand, and a covert sneer on his lip, suing for her favour, she would toss her hundred thousand florins or so into his cap with an air of ostentatious nonchalance, bowing the while with an expression that indicated her *roturier* inability to stand quite straight-backed in the presence of "the quality;" nevertheless, when the festival was over, and the noble beggarman had ridden away with the good Florentine gold pieces in his pocket, when Florence went home to its thrifty though castellated palaces, and sat down spectacles on nose, and a little hot-ash pot in hand supplying the place of wasteful fire, to examine the state of the ledger, there was many a long face as the total of the whistle's cost became apparent.

It was very pleasant for the little trading city on the Arno to find itself making and unmaking Popes, settling the conscience difficulties of all the sovereigns in Europe for them, deciding between rival princes, receiving and sending embassies to and from all parts of the world, accepting the submission and allegiance of subjected cities. But it did cost "*un orrore*," * as a descendant of one of those old Florentines would say at the present day. And then the mischief was, that let who might take part in the dance, Florence was sure to have to pay the piper! The Pope wants to hire a captain of free lances, and the noble captain is proud to serve his Holiness; very distinctly declines, however, to take the Holy Father's promise to pay; till a quiet old gentleman in a sad-coloured mantle

* "An awful lot of money," as an Englishman would say.



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A.D. 1411. and a peaked hood, without so much as a knight's handle to his name, whispers that it shall be made all right. The arrangements for a pacification after a general war are brought to a hitch by some difficulty, to be solved only by a payment, bribe, or compensation to somebody or other. That part of the matter, of course, falls to the share of the Florentine delegates.

Florence always paid. The quantity of cash which she had disbursed for public objects during the last half-century amounted to an almost incredible sum. And the fact was, she had been spending money somewhat too fast. The money borrowed of its citizens by the State was sure to be repaid, and with good interest perhaps. But what signified that to merchants and bankers, who needed not interest to live on, but capital to carry on the work that made Florence rich? The abstraction of this capital, whatever the terms as to interest, was a manifest killing of the goose that laid the golden eggs. And it is equally clear, that the payment of exorbitant interest was a process of killing by inches, which must in the long run prove no less fatal to that valuable bird.

Florence had been spending money too fast, and was beginning to feel symptoms of financial exhaustion. War had been in Florence, as elsewhere, the great consumer. If the Commonwealth would become more thrifty, it must become more peaceful; it must be less prone to go to war with its neighbours. And to secure this end the Florentines thought, as usual with them, that nothing was needed save appropriate legislation. Never had any people a more unbounded faith in the power of direct legislation to secure any required effect. And yet it might have been supposed that never had any community better reason for knowing that legislation in contradiction to social tendencies, and to the will of the great bulk of the nation, is as futile as the good resolutions of a confirmed drunkard. A new

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law, with a new magistrate to execute the law, was the panacea to which Florence had immediate recourse for the remedy of any and every social evil. And if, as we have seen was constantly the case throughout the history of the Commonwealth, it was found that the laws were not put into execution, still the same remedy was applied with unabated confidence; and a second magistrate, or board of magistrates, was appointed, to see that the first did their duty. A.D. 1411.

There were already two councils, having the nature of more or less restrictedly elected representative chambers, the "*Consiglio del Popolo*," and the "*Consiglio del Comune*." But the Commonwealth had gone to war more often than was desirable in despite of these. It was determined, therefore, in the first months of the year 1411 to create two other councils, in which any measure calculated to involve the community in war must be voted before it could acquire legal force. The first of these was called the Council of the Hundred and Thirty-one, and bore a considerable analogy to our own Privy Council. It consisted of the Gonfaloniere and Priors, their assessors, the Captains of the Guelph Party, the Ten of Liberty, six Counsellors of Commerce, the twenty-one Consuls of the Guilds, and forty-eight other citizens. The other, called the Council of Two Hundred, was of the nature of a Senate. In each of the four quarters of the city all the names of those who since the year 1381,—since the reversion of all the changes made by the Ciompi insurrection, that is to say,—had been held eligible to the three major offices of the state, were to be put into an urn, and fifty drawn therefrom to form the council. The persons so drawn, however, must be at least thirty years old; and not more than three belonging to one "*Consorteria*" (or knot of connected families) could sit in the council.

In this last council every proposition involving a question



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A.D. 1411. of war was to be originated, and could not be entertained by any other body of the state until it had passed the Council of Two Hundred by a majority of at least two-thirds. Then the measure was to be carried before the Hundred and Thirty-one; and if it was passed there also, it came before the *Consiglio del Popolo*, and lastly before the *Consiglio del Comune*. And not till it had passed all these four ordeals could any resolution involving a question of war be carried into effect.*

When it is remembered that all these numerous councils and boards and magistrates and deliberative chambers had to be chosen out of a body of individuals hardly to be estimated at above a few hundreds in number,—the adult males of the well-to-do classes of a population of some ninety or an hundred thousand,—it cannot but strike the reader that the creation of all this legislative machinery was but a casting of the same material in moulds of different shapes and sizes;—a process by which neither any increase nor any deprivation of the amount of wisdom contained in the mass was in anywise attained.

It would result from all these precautions that Florence would not go to war unless she was thoroughly minded to do so, and that was all. She remained, indeed, firmly bent on peace for about four or five months after making the above legislative arrangements. The war which then arose was indeed a little one, and no doubt a necessary one; but it once again necessitated the drawing of the Florentine purse-strings.

The Genoese had occupied Leghorn in 1404, and had remained there ever since. They were very discontented at the possession by Florence of the small forts of Sarzanello and Lerici, which the Commonwealth had bought of the governors left there by Bucicaldo, when Genoa revolted against his rule, and which infested all the Tuscan

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 718.

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seaboard with their galleys, so that the Florentines had often difficulty in bringing their goods to Porto Pisano, at the mouth of the Arno. This question of seaboard rights and harbour privileges was one of increasing importance at this period of the commercial Commonwealth's life. Time had been when the possession of a wretched little fishing village at the mouth of some creek or inlet on the insalubrious shore of the Maremma, would have been deemed by the ambitious rising community among the hills of the upper valley of the Arno an utterly contemptible and worthless acquisition, in comparison with the mountain stronghold of some robber feudal noble, or still more with the possession of some strongly-walled towerlet of the Mugello or the Chianti hills. But all this was altered now. Not that the bankers and merchants, who sat in the magnificent council chambers of the palace of the Signory in Florence, had become insensible to the ambition of pushing back their frontiers and rounding off the territory of the Commonwealth by swallowing up an independent little community in one quarter, or reducing an autocrat noble to obedience in another. The sixty thousand florins just paid for Cortona prove that such was by no means the case. But the necessity for possessing independent means of access to the sea had become a point of paramount importance. And the rulers of a dominion which now included the city of Pisa, whose citizens had once upon a time affected to speak of the Florentines as a wild hill people of whom they knew very little, and which, when those days and those affectations had long since passed away, had been the potent rival of Florence, and at least her equal in dignity, wealth, and power,—the rulers who now held as a subject province that Pisa which had once been mistress of the sea, could not but feel that they were called on by necessity, as well as by their right and dignity, to become themselves a maritime power. A.D. 1111.

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A.D. 1411. Nevertheless, the recent good resolutions of economy and peacefulness had still, after four months, so much influence in the counsels of the Commonwealth, that ambassadors were sent to meet those from Genoa at Pietra Santa,* to see if it were possible to come to some terms of agreement with the rival interests of Genoa la Superba. But the interests of the Genoese, merchants and manufacturers like the Florentines, and besides a seafaring population into the bargain, were too identical with those of the Valdarno city for it to be possible to accord their opposite pretensions. The classical "idem velle, atque idem nolle," was found to conduce to anything but friendship when the identity of the thing desired was the material possession of the same harbours, and the identity of dislike the presence of competition in the carrying trade on the ocean highways.

Nothing could be done by the meeting of the envoys at Pietra Santa, and it once more became necessary "to assign money"—to take a vote as we should say—for the hire of a maritime force to repel the Genoese encroachments by force. The historians do not even think it worth while to mention whether or not this new war with Genoa was sanctioned by the four councils in the manner prescribed. "It was necessary to assign money from the public purse" for the purpose, we are told, and that is all.

Again, the recent law which was to obviate the frequency of war, provided that no increase of the territory of the Commonwealth should be accepted by Florence, as being eminently calculated to involve the Republic in quarrels, without similar sanction by the four councils. But in the autumn of that year, Porto Venere, a very ancient town with a small harbour in the Gulf of Spezzia,—half-way therefore between Genoa and Florence,—"gave itself to

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 720.

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Florence," *i.e.*, for the price, as it incidentally appears from a subsequent passage of the historian, of 8400 golden florins. And no mention is made of the question of accepting the dangerous and costly present having been referred to the four councils. But we hear surely enough of the 320 golden florins a month which Florence undertook to pay the people of Porto Venere as long as the differences with Genoa should last. Jacopo Gianfigliazzo was sent to take possession of the new acquisition on the 4th of November, 1411, for the purpose of harassing the Genoese. A.D. 1412.

In the course of the next month this little war with Genoa made it absolutely necessary to raise money; but neither the *Consiglio del Popolo* nor the *Consiglio del Comune* would consent to the raising of a new loan. So a "vigorous" government, with the Gonfaloniere Serragli at its head,—making a precedent for a mode of action which we have heard of having been adopted with success elsewhere,—set a guard at the doors of the council chambers, and kept the members there imprisoned till the desired measure was voted,—a step which, we are told, "was much blamed in the city by those who had no great part in the government." It is worthy of remark, that so audacious a violation of all legality and constitutional liberty was followed by no stronger mark of the resentment of a people who had again and again risen in arms to settle the question who it should be who was to have an opportunity of thus acting.

In the spring of 1412 more money was wanted; and it became necessary to appoint a board of eight for the augmentation of the customs duties. And the war went on with much damage to the trade of both cities, but without any signal military success on either side, till peace was concluded by the mediation of the Pope, and finally sealed by the representatives of either Commonwealth at

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A.D. 1413. Lucca, on the 27th April, 1413. The terms do not seem to have been very favourable to Florence. They were to give up Sarzanella and Porto Venere,—neither of them, it is true, of much value to the Commonwealth,—receiving back the sum they had paid for the latter. Leghorn was to remain in the possession of the Genoese; but the Florentines were to have the right of freely using the port, and were not to contribute to the expense of guarding it. Porto Pisano was to remain in the hands of the Florentines; but they were bound to destroy the fort which guarded it, and to exempt the Genoese from all duties and customs on entering it.

This Genoese war had not been a sufficiently big or dangerous one to secure the city from internal discord, as the greater contests of the Commonwealth usually did. A conspiracy had been discovered, in which certain of the Alberti family, whom we have already heard of as having taken part with the populace at the time of the rising of the Ciompi, were chiefly implicated. The object was, as usual, to bring back certain exiles into the city, to put to death certain private enemies belonging to the party in power, and—"*mutar lo stato*"—that infallibly recurring phrase, by which was meant simply the turning out of those who were in power, and the putting of those who were out, in their places. The Alberti were old offenders against the party which had now been in power ever since the execution of Giorgio Scali and the anti-popular revolution of 1382; and it was deemed necessary to make an end of them, by decapitating the head of the family, and banishing every one of the race, even to the infant in arms.

Another incident of the same period may be mentioned, not so much for the sake of showing the Republican government under a more agreeable aspect, as because it serves to illustrate the domestic condition and habits of the

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epoch. Bartolommeo Popoleschi had served the Commonwealth well in many embassies to a variety of powers; and he died in its service in the summer of 1412, at Naples, whither he had been sent to arrange a peace, if possible, between King Ladislaus and Pope John. But he had so little used any of these opportunities for the purpose of enriching himself, that he left seven young daughters wholly unprovided for. The government therefore made a special grant of a dowry of two hundred golden florins to each of them if she should marry, and of one hundred if she should become a nun. Any other possible alternative besides these two, it will be observed, was not contemplated as at all possible.* A.D. 1413.

This well-deserving servant of the State died at his post, having been able to accomplish so little towards the object of this the last of the many affairs that had been entrusted to him, that very soon after his death Ladislaus recommenced the ambitious designs which the Florentine power alone had compelled him for a time to lay aside. The Pope had been unwise enough to make overtures to his irreconcileable enemy, the King of Naples, for the destruction by the latter of Paolo Orsini, who was the Pope's only reliable defender, though the Holy Father was enraged with him, because he suspected that Orsini did not do all he might have done for the utter destruction of Ladislaus. There is reason to believe that this suspicion was not a wholly unfounded one. It seems probable enough, that the able and noble free-lance Captain, who had states of his own lying near the borders of the Ecclesiastical dominions and Tuscany to care for, thought that his best game was not to make an end too utterly of either of the two rival claimants of the Neapolitan throne—Ladislaus, the friend and patron of the deposed antipope,

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 727.

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A.D. 1413. or Louis of Anjou, the friend and patron of John, the Pope in possession. Nevertheless, he had regained Rome for the Holy Father from Ladislaus; and would in all probability defend it against that invader. It was a capital mistake of the Pope to quarrel with him.

The result was what might have been easily anticipated. The King, appearing to fall in with the Pontiff's views, was able without any opposition from the latter to put his army into complete marching order, and lead it into the Marches of Ancona where Orsini then was, ready either to join with him in making themselves masters of the Eternal City, or to fight him simply and then march on Rome by himself.

There were, however, Roman exiles in the camp of Ladislaus, who assured him that, Orsini having been disinclined by the Pope's treachery from assisting him, they would be able to open the city gates to him, and give it into his hands without a blow being struck. And they performed their promises. Orsini remained quietly in the Marches; and on the night of the 8th of June, 1413, Ladislaus entered Rome, and made himself master of it, before the Pope rose on the following morning. As soon as he became aware of the state of things, he escaped from the city and fled, "bitterly weeping over his folly in having expected to meet with good faith in one whom his own example had so admirably taught to observe no faith." *

The fugitive Pontiff directed his flight towards Florence, hoping once again to find support from the patrons to whose authority and exertions he had been in great measure indebted for his elevation to the Papacy. On his journey northwards he met four Florentine citizens, Filippo Corsini, Jacopo Gianfigliazzi, Michele Castellani, and Bernardo Guadagni, who had been sent by the Republic

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 732.

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to condole with him on his misfortune. They were charged to say everything that was civil to the Holy Father on behalf of the Republic, to offer him the support and assistance of the Commonwealth in any way in which they could be of use to him ;—but to tell him that he could not be received in Florence. The Commonwealth, they said, had made peace with Ladislaus ; and it would not suit the views of Florence to run the risk of giving him such offence as might lead them to war with him again.* A.D. 1413.

This somewhat ungenerously prudent conduct succeeded as little as it deserved in attaining the object of it. Ladislaus, once master of Rome, cared little for peace with Florence, and less for all that the Pope could do against him. One of his first acts at Rome, was to seize all the property and merchandize of the Florentines in Rome. And this conduct, together with the progress he was already making in subjecting the cities and fortresses of the Ecclesiastical States, made it necessary once again, in June, 1413, to appoint a war board of ten. No word is said by the historians on this occasion either of the consent of the newly created councils.

Notwithstanding, however, any small interior troubles, hardly a year passed of this early portion of the fifteenth century, without bringing with it some new evidence of the rising greatness of Florence, which had now become the most powerful state in Italy, with the exception perhaps of Venice. In the summer of this year, just when the Commonwealth was on the point of becoming again involved in war with Ladislaus, the King of Naples, who now held Rome and most part of the Papal territory in his grasp also, we find Guidantonio, Count of Montefeltro and Urbino, Ludovico degli Alidosi, Lord of Imola, and Ugolino de' Trinci, Lord of Foligno, all suing to be accepted as

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Gonf. 733.

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A.D. 1414. the *protégés* and vassals of the Commonwealth. All these great feudal nobles were graciously received under the protection of the mercantile community, the first for ten years, the second for six, and the third for five years. It is probable that these sovereign nobles would have refused to admit that the term "vassal" was correctly applied to them. In the language of the time they were the "*raccomandati*" of the Commonwealth. But in every case one part of the arrangement expressly provided that each noble *protégé* of the Republic should be bound to present annually a "*palio*,"—a banner, that is, to Florence. And this, according to feudal theory and practice, would seem to imply a recognition of vassalage.

An embassy sent by the Commonwealth to the King, having consumed all the summer months in negotiation without having attained any satisfactory result, and it becoming clearer every day that Ladislaus was bent on designs which would give the Republic trouble, it became necessary to appoint a general-in-chief of the Florentine forces; and Malatesta, Lord of Pesaro, received the bâton of this office from the hands of the Signory on the 25th of August. The rest of that year and the spring of the next passed quietly, though not without constantly recurring indications that the quiet would not last long.

Ladislaus, as was well known to the sleepless vigilance of the Signory, was getting together large sums of money, and collecting men in Naples. In November news reached Florence that the castle of St. Angelo, which had till that time held out for the Pope, had been given up to Ladislaus. The Florentine festivity of the New Year's Day was spoiled by the tidings that the King was on the point of leaving Naples at the head of a powerful army of veteran troops. On the 9th of April it was known that he had entered Rome, in such sort that "if ever Florence had reason to think herself in danger, she had reason now.

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For this King Ladislaus was not like the old Duke of Milan, who made war by the intervention of his captains. The King made war in person, and was ever the foremost in the fight, in passing rivers, in making reconnaissances of the enemy, and in everything else that pertains to the duty of a brave soldier. Besides all which, he was only in the thirty-seventh year of his age." A.D. 1414.

On the 4th of May, 1414, Ladislaus marched out of Rome, raging against Florence and threatening her entire ruin. But the object of all this bluster seems to have been merely to frighten the Florentines into acquiescing in his designs against the territories of the Pope. It is very doubtful whether Florence did wisely in wishing peace with such a man on such terms. It was nearly certain, that as soon as he had strengthened himself by establishing himself securely in the Ecclesiastical States, he would use his increased power to push on to further conquests. The same bright prize which had shone in the eyes of so many an ambitious chieftain, and which Florence was so unchangingly bent on preventing any one of them from attaining,—the sovereignty of a united Italy,—was no doubt the object of this Ladislaus's restless efforts. And if Florence had thought it necessary to go to war with Gian Maria Visconti of Milan, because he had absorbed the neighbouring lordships of Verona and Padua, surely the danger, which they had then so providently guarded against, was more imminent, when a younger and more able man (as a military man at least) was making himself master of all that lay between the Neapolitan and the Florentine frontier!

But the difference of the conduct of the Commonwealth on the two occasions must be attributed, if not to the immediate action of those two new councils, which were to make war so difficult, at least to the spirit which had caused the creation of them. If Florence was becoming

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A.D. 1414. more powerful every year, she was also becoming every year richer; and her riches were more widely scattered over Europe, so as to be exposed to destruction by war between the Commonwealth and its neighbours. Every year, too, peace in general was more desirable to the continually extending trade and banking operations of the Florentines.

King Ladislaus received the ambassadors sent to him by Florence with the greatest courtesy, and a profusion of professions of his desire to be on good terms with their government. Doubtless he desired to be so for the present, if only they would not interfere with his designs on the Papal territory. And rich Florence, keenly feeling that war meant the payment of war taxes and injury to Florentine commerce, was induced to make a separate peace for herself, throwing over her ally the Pope, which assuredly Florence in the old times of her poverty, when war meant the giving and receiving hard blows in the field by her own citizens, would not have done. It was the first time that the Commonwealth had ever been guilty of such selfish policy; and the news that a treaty of peace had been signed in the King's camp under Assisi, on the 22nd of June, 1414, was not received with much pleasure in Florence.* It had indeed been stipulated by the Florentine ambassadors that the King should do nothing against Bologna, whither the fugitive Pope had betaken himself; but it was felt that Florence had not been faithful in this matter to the Pope, her ally; and the citizens had an uneasy and novel sense of being ashamed of the public actions of their community.

An embassy was immediately despatched to Pope John at Bologna, to excuse the Signory as best they might, pointing out to the Holy Father that Florence "could not

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Gonf. 739.

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have done otherwise." The Pope however did not see it in that light, and was grievously displeased with the conduct of the Commonwealth. A.D. 1414.

The discontent, moreover, of those among the citizens who had disapproved of the treaty with the King, was confirmed and increased, when shortly afterwards, on the 7th of August, the manifest consequences of deserting a Pope in his distress were seen in the occurrence of a series of earthquakes, of so violent a character as to compel most of the inhabitants of the city to quit their dwellings for fear of being buried under the ruins of them. It was thought that there could be no doubt about the true significance of these signs and wonders. Nevertheless the most positive interpreters of these providential manifestations admitted that they had been led into reading the text amiss, when a few days later news reached the city that King Ladislaus had suddenly died at Naples, of a violent fever, in the flower of his age! That was what the earthquake meant after all. "Aut erit, aut non!" So all was changed to rejoicing and gladness in the city. And the earthquake was recognised as a friendly earthquake, which had only intended to tell in its own rough way a piece of coming good news.

But stories began to be whispered about, how the late King in the delirium of his fever had continually raved about putting Paolo Orsini to death, and bringing ruin upon Florence. So that there could be no further doubt about the intentions this dangerous sovereign had had in his mind. And once again Death had shown itself, as the historian says, "a more valuable friend to the Florentines than any other friend whatever!"*

* The words are quoted by Ammirato,—without any acknowledgment, as was the way with the old historians,—from Machiavelli, who adds, "and more powerful to save them, than any valour or excellence of their own."—Machiavelli, Istoria, Edit. cit., p. 227. Stories were then and at a subse-

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A.D. 1414. All danger from Neapolitan ambition was now over for the present. For Giovanna II., the late King's sister, who succeeded her childless brother on the throne, sent an embassy immediately to Florence declaring her desire to live on good terms with the Commonwealth, and with her neighbour the Pope, whom she had always for her part recognised as the true Vicar of Christ, whatever her brother's conviction on that point might have been. Of course the harassed Pope was delighted to hear such laudable sentiments, and was perfectly ready to make peace for his part.

Once again, therefore, a prospect of tranquillity was open before Florence,—a more promising one indeed than she had ever before seen. For there did not appear to be a cloud in any part of the political sky of Italy. It was evident that Queen Giovanna of Naples wished for peace. Of the two legitimate sons to whom Giangaleazzo Visconti had bequeathed his overgrown dominions, and his yet more overgrown ambition and designs, Giovanni-Maria had been slain by conspirators at Milan, and his brother Filippo-Maria had quite enough on his hands to ensure his position on his own throne. The Genoese were content to occupy themselves with the establishment of their recently acquired freedom from the tyranny of France, and the Venetians had no interest in disturbing the general quiet,—least of all in interfering with their fellow, yet not injuriously rival, commercial community on the banks of the Arno.

Honours of all sorts, ecclesiastical and civil, were not

quent period rife, which attributed the death of Ladislaus to foul practice by Florentine agents. The reader who is more curious than nice may see some very strange speculations as to the causes and manner of this King's death in "Illustrazione, No. 53," appended to the 6th volume of Ammirato, Edit. oct., Firenze, 1826. It must be owned that it is impossible to avoid being struck by the opportuneness of the deaths which again and again saved Florence in crises of great danger, *e. g.*, Henry of Luxembourg, Giangaleazzo Visconti, and Ladislaus of Naples!

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wanting to render this piping time of peace a season of gladness and rejoicing to the flourishing city. The Order of the Dominicans held their great meeting for the election of a General of the Order in Florence, and the choice fell on Leonardo Dati, a Florentine citizen. But far more important still was a petition which reached the Signory from Braccio da Montone, certainly at that time the most rising man in Italy, begging to be received into the protection of the Commonwealth,—which was graciously accorded him for a period of ten years. A.D. 1415.

This Braccio, the scion of a noble family of Perugia of the name of Fortebracci, had inherited a small feudal estate called Montone from his ancestors. But having, as the old historian says, a soul too large for the narrow limits of that small domain, or, as we should say, being a man of energy, talent, and ambition, he threw himself with all the vigour of a man determined to consider the world his oyster to be opened by his sword, into the only path which then could lead a poor noble on to fortune. He became a captain of free lances, and as such had acquired before he was forty-seven—his age at the time we are speaking of—the reputation of the most famous and able general in Europe. A close connection of the nature proposed with such a man might prove a most important thing to the Commonwealth, and the application gave the citizens no little pride and pleasure.

It was gratifying, naturally so, that all these great princes, captains, and warriors should come cap in hand asking for the patronage and protection of the burgher city. Of course the worthy bankers and cloth manufacturers, ay, and the bare-armed artisans of the lower guilds, felt the compliment. But still there was an *amari aliquid*, which in some degree spoiled the flavour of all this greatness to the palates of the citizens. "Cap in hand," I said. Yes! And the phrase expresses the atti-



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A.D. 1416. tude of these noble men of war before the merchant community but too accurately! For that cap in the hand symbolizes more than one meeting! The noble captains most pertinaciously held it there,—could not in anywise be persuaded to "cover themselves," till a sufficiently heavy lump of Florentine gold had been tossed into those caps in hand! And there were so many of them now all expecting a handsome dole from the coffers of the Commonwealth.

There were Niccolo Marchese da Este, the Conte Guidantonio da Montefeltro, Niccolo de' Trinci, lord of Foligno, the Conte di Nola, the Conte Ruggieri of Perugia, the Marchese Bartolemmeo Malaspina, and Malatesta of Pesaro, all looking for pay from the Florentine Signory. And really it began to cause some little embarrassment and discontent in the midst of the glorious summer of the Florentine prosperity, that such large sums should be needed in time of profound peace.

Amid an increasing prosperity, disturbed only by some grumblings on this score, the years 1415 and 1416 passed in Florence with a more entire absence of trouble of any kind than any years that the Commonwealth had seen for a long time,—than any probably that it had ever seen. And looking out around the horizon on all sides from its central position in the very heart of Italy, there was no cloud to be seen, no menace of approaching danger from any quarter. And Florence thought that now at length the good time had really come when she would have nothing to do but increase her store in peace and quietness.

But the black cloud was rising all the time slowly from beneath the horizon, in a quarter where the Florentines did not think of looking for it. The interruption to their prosperous buying and selling, and eating and drinking, was at their doors from a hand whose operations they

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had not counted on, and which had not been included in the provisions of their treaties. A.D. 1417.

In the spring of 1417, Pestilence stalked silently into the walled city, and glared round upon the scared citizens in the midst of their feasting. Why or whence it came none knew. It was among them; and the memory of its last visit was not so obliterated in Florence that the Florentines were not well aware of what the presence of pestilence meant. They were not deceived by the slowness and smallness of its first operations. As the heats of summer came on the death-bell was more frequently heard, and the crosses that marked the smitten houses began to outnumber those which the death-angel had passed over! Before the end of the year the number of deaths amounted to sixteen thousand!

Nothing was neglected which the sanitary science of the time could suggest as a means of stopping the infection. The celebrated picture of the black Virgin was at once brought into the city from the Impruneta;* and it was thought that the number of deaths would have been much larger if it had not been for the admirable idea of ordering that the miraculous figure should then and thenceforth, at all its future comings into Florence, be met at the city gate by a largely increased honorary *cortége* of torches.

During this time of pestilence died—though whether he was one of its victims is not certain—Maso degli Albizzi, the most powerful citizen in Florence, and the head of the aristocratic party which had held the government in their hands ever since the revolution which succeeded to the Ciompi riots. He was in his seventieth year, and his life had been singularly divided into two portions, the first of which had been marked by adversity as pertinacious and

* A village on the top of a high hill about seven miles to the south of Florence; where the miraculous image, still venerated by the Florentines more than they venerate anything else, lives when it is at home.



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A.D. 1417. as bitter as the prosperity of the latter had been constant and brilliant. And the dividing point between the two had been that revolution in 1382. He had seen the palace of his ancestors burned, his venerable uncle beheaded, himself a homeless exile, and one branch of his family compelled to adopt another name and cognizance, as the sole condition on which they could be tolerated in their native city. Since the revolution, which had changed all that course of misfortune, he had been continually at the pinnacle of civic greatness, and had had the happiness, as the historian remarks in summing up the blessings he had enjoyed, of revenging himself on the Alberti by the entire ruin of that family. It was many years that the venerable old man had to wait for that crowning blessing of "seeing his desire upon his enemy." It came only six years before his own death. But when it did come, it came in exquisite perfection. Root and branch, even to the infant in arms, the hated race which had been the Albizzi's enemy had been hounded forth from their homes. And then the aged Albizzi, full of years and honours, could die in peace, and was buried with a public funeral at the cost of the Commonwealth.

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## CHAPTER III.

State of the Papacy—Council of Constance—Pope John XXIII. deposed—Election of Martin V.—Who takes up his residence at Florence—His entry into the city—His dwelling at Santa Maria Novella—Affair of the Marchese Lionardo Malaspina—Pope Martin gives the Golden Rose to Florence—Spanish Cardinals come to Florence to make submission to Pope Martin—The deposed Pope John XXIII. comes to make submission to Pope Martin—The death and inheritance of the former—Florence erected into an Archbishopric—Filippo-Maria Visconti proposes to Florence to make a formal peace—Suspicions caused in Florence by the proposal—Position of the Visconti affairs—Debates in Florence on Visconti's proposal—The treaty of peace is signed—Braccio Fortebracci comes to Florence, and enters into engagements with Pope Martin—The Pope quits Florence to go to Rome—Sources of the enmity of Pope Martin against Florence—The city under interdict for one day—Ceremonial of the Pope's departure—Symptoms of a breach between Milan and Florence—Filippo-Maria Visconti makes himself master of Genoa—Leghorn purchased by Florence—Commencement of the building of the cupola of the Cathedral by Brunellescho—Affair of Monaco and the brothers Grimaldi—Details of the prosperity and wealth of Florence at this period—Giovanni de' Medici Gonfaloniere in 1421—Common ancestor of the two great branches of the family—Discussion in Florence on the nomination of Giovanni de' Medici to be Gonfaloniere—Consequences of this rise of the Medici.

The only element of disturbance which after the death of Ladislaus in the August of 1414 seemed still to menace the general tranquillity of Italy was the condition of the Papacy. There were three Popes, and no one of them in possession of Rome, or scarcely of any part of the Ecclesiastical states. There was Pope Benedict, who had been schismatically elected by the Avignon Cardinals, and had never been anything better than an antipope. There was Pope Gregory, who had been canonically elected, but was deposed by the Council of Pisa, and who is therefore

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A.D. 1419. reckoned by the Church in the list of the Pontiffs as Gregory XII., but who became an antipope after his deposition and the election of his successor by the Cardinals assembled at Pisa. And finally, there was Pope John XXIII., who had been elected by that Council.

But though canonically and duly elected Pope by the Cardinals at Pisa, that election availed nothing towards putting him in possession of Rome or its dependencies, which were held by the King of Naples, who affected to consider Benedict the true Pontiff. A fugitive from Rome therefore, and helpless to gain possession of any of the temporalities of his Papacy, Pope John had been induced to promise the Emperor Sigismond that he would call a General Council of the Church at Constance.

On the 5th of November, 1414, he opened an œcumenical Council in that little town accordingly; and on the 29th of the following March was deposed by the parricidal authority he had created. The Council, however, which treacherously enticed John Huss and Jerome of Prague into its power, and then condemned them to the flames, was clearly an orthodox and canonical Council, and there was nothing left for Pope John but to submit to its decree. On the 11th of November, 1417, the Council elected the Cardinal Colonna Pope by the name of Martin V., making thus the fourth Pope in the field!

Still this Council was as powerless as its predecessor at Pisa to put its Pope into possession of the temporalities of his See. And under these circumstances Martin V. thought that he could not do better than accept the offers brought to him at Mantua by ambassadors from Florence, that he should for the present make that city his home. On the 25th of February, 1419, he arrived at the monastery of San Salvi,* about a mile outside the

* It was the scene, as perhaps the reader may remember, of old Corso Donati's death; and is now, as the traveller in modern Italy may perhaps

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Santa Croce gate of the city, and there remained for that night. A.D. 1419.

Of course the entry of the Pope into the city was to be a grand affair. It was decided that it should take place not by the Porta di Santa Croce, which was the nearest to the place where he was, but by the Porta San Gallo. At a small distance from the gate there is the communal church of San Gallo, and the Pope remained there while the ceremony of his entry was being arranged. The Captains of the Guelph Party waited on him there, and presented him with a very beautiful and gentle white jennet on which he was to ride into the city. Under the gateway,—not the hideous pile of stone and marble which, erected more than two centuries afterwards to honour the entry of some German royal or imperial guest, now stands uselessly in advance of the real gateway, but the grim and grey old entrance beneath its tower in the city wall,—there he was received by the Gonfaloniere Filicaia,—with his heart full of thoughts as widely contrasted as is well possible to conceive them with those that have made his descendant's name a household word throughout Europe,—and by the provost of the guilds. The Gonfaloniere took the right rein of the palfrey in his hand, and the provost that on the left, and thus led the Pope under a canopy of brocade, supported by a deputation of the leading citizens, and followed by a long procession of his attendants and courtiers. "And there were the *Magnifici Signori*,* with their assessors, and all the magistrates of Florence, and the Six Counsellors of the Merchants,† and

recollect, noted, though no longer inhabited by monks, for a magnificent "Last Supper," by Andrea del Sarto, in the refectory.

* The proper style and title of the Signory, consisting of the Gonfaloniere and the Priors.

† A board for the special regulation of the matters connected with trade, which acquired a great credit even in foreign countries, as an Admiralty Court.

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A.D. 1419. the Chapters of all the Guilds, and all the nobility of the citizens of Florence, all clothed in the best that they had, a magnificent sight to see, with garlands of olive boughs on their heads, and with a standard of cloth of gold, lined with ermine. * * * * Then came a hundred young men dressed in cloth, each with a wax candle of ten pounds weight in his hand; and next the Cardinals; and next to them a mule with a splendidly ornamented chest on its back, and with the body of Christ in the chest; and next after that the Pope under a canopy of brocade. And on entering the city the whole gate was opened and the portcullis was entirely removed, a thing which it had never been customary to do even for the most holy Popes or Emperors.* And without any noise, and with much devotion, the procession passed straight down the Borgo St. Lorenzo; and the Pope dismounted at the Cathedral on a platform covered with carpet at the foot of the steps; and thence he walked on his own feet upon white woollen cloths up the nave to the high altar; and having there performed the proper reverences and ceremonies, he remounted his palfrey, and passing by the Piazza of the Signory, and the Por Santa Maria,† and the Borgo Sant' Apostolo, and the Spini and Tornaquinci palaces, dismounted at the convent of Santa Maria Novella, accompanied by those above mentioned, and followed by a bishop, who kept throwing round as he went a variety of small coins for the sake of magnificence, and in order that the people might not crowd so;" (one might have thought that this distribution, however well imagined as a display of "magnificence," was calculated to produce exactly the reverse of the effect intended in the matter of the crowding;) "and the Pope

* Another chronicler mentions this same circumstance, and makes the same observation on it. It is evident that much was thought in Florence of this special compliment to the new Pope.

† The street now called the "Mercato Nuovo."

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got off his horse, and went to repose, for he was very tired. And the Pope's mace-bearers took possession of the standards of the Captains of the Guelph Party, and of the canopy which the Signory had held over the Pope, and over the *Corpus Domini*. And the government deliberated and ordered that the fund for the maintenance of the Cathedral should pay one thousand five hundred golden florins to the friars of Santa Maria Novella to make preparations and an apartment fit to receive the Pope. And so there was constructed in the second cloister a vast hall, with other living rooms annexed to it, with the arms of the Commune over them, and those of the Woollen Mercers' Guild below, as may be seen to this day.* And to all the Cardinals our *Magnifici Signori* made a present, to each of them confectionary, wine, wax, meal, and wild game to the value of fifty golden florins,—for each one of them, as has been said; and there were counted nineteen Cardinals that day around the Pope at the high altar of Santa Maria Novella."† A.D. 1419.

In this prosperous time of peace and tranquillity, the Signory had leisure to occupy itself with the affairs of other people, in a manner which curiously illustrates the sort of position that these proud citizens assumed, and were admitted to hold, with reference to their nominally independent neighbours.

There was a Marchese Lionardo Malaspina, who lived in feudal independence at his castle of Aquila amid the craggy mountain solitudes of the Val di Magra. The family became extinct in 1742: but the remains of their half-ruined castle may yet be seen on its crag above the

* The author is writing in 1511.

† Istorie di Giovanni Cambi. Printed in the 20th and following volumes of the Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani. See p. 141. For some account of this singularly quaint old writer, the reader curious on the subject may see the Appendix to a History of the Girlhood of Catherine de' Medici by the author, p. 319.

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A.D. 1419. little torrent of the Aulella, near the frontier of Tuscany and the Duchy of Modena, by any scenery-hunting wanderer in that rarely-traversed district. This chieftain recognising no superior authority, save that of God and the Emperor, and deeming these almost equally far off, lived in that condition of lawless independence, which still remained among those feudal nobles, the remoteness of whose fiefs from the larger centres of civilization had hitherto enabled them to escape the lot of those of their quondam fellows, who had been reduced to subjection and comparative civilization by the towns.

This Marchese Malaspina di Castel Aquila had a neighbour, also a wealthy territorial noble, the Marchese Niccolò di Verrucola, whose family consisted of a son and daughter, and a wife, who, when the facts to be related happened, was about to present him with another child. The daughter Spinetta, a girl of singular beauty, was engaged, or was asserted by the Marchese Malaspina to be engaged (for there seems to have been some doubt on this point) to his younger brother Galeotto Malaspina. But though her beauty may have made Spinetta appear a desirable bride in the eyes of the younger of the Malaspina brothers, it seemed to the elder that she would at least be a much more fitting one, if she were the heiress of the fiefs,—no less than seventeen in number,—of her family.

But in the minds of men of the stamp, and in the position, of the Marchese Lionardo, the idea that any object was desirable was rarely unfollowed by the attempt to realise it. Spinetta would be her father's heiress if her brother were out of the way! There could be no very great difficulty about that! Yes; would be her father's heiress! . . . . unless indeed the child about to be born of the Marchesa di Verrucola should turn out to be a boy! It would be simply useless to put the young Marchese to death, unless that chance were provided against. And

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yet it was awkward to wait for the event of the Marchesa's confinement. Suspicions might arise. Precautions might be taken. There are so many slips between the cup and the lip! No; if a blow were to be struck, it must be one blow, once for all! And then again, the widowed and heirless Marchese Niccolò might take another wife, and have other children. It would never do to play so high a stake, and leave the prize after all in the power of Fortune. No; the only way was to make a clean sweep of it! Then indeed, the winning would be not only sure, but immediate also. It was clear that that was the only way! A.D 1419.

So one Giovanni Maraccio was taken into the Marchese Lionardo's confidence. How abundantly plentiful such men must have been in Italy, will be clear to any one who remembers what has been written of the Free-lance Companies, and the nature of the materials of which they were composed. Giovanni Maraccio could no doubt put his hand at once on as many assistants as might be needful for the work in hand. He took his orders; and the Marchese Niccolò di Verrucola, his pregnant wife, and his son, were all murdered in their castle home of Verrucola! Spinetta was captured; and for the moment sent away into safe keeping in distant Pisa; while Malaspina seized the seventeen fiefs of her heritage, as her brother-in-law in expectation.

Of course, such a deed could not be done even among the fastnesses of the Apennines without being talked about in the neighbouring valleys and hamlets. Nor does there appear to have been any doubt at all as to the real author of the crime. But who was to call the Marchese Malaspina to account? Even supposing the trembling little lawyers who managed the administrative affairs of the small neighbouring towns had deemed themselves to have any jurisdiction over the lord of Castel Aquila, was it likely

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A.D. 1419. that any one among them, or any executive functionary appertaining to them or their courts, would venture to approach that fortress on its crag among the mountains on any such errand as summoning its lord to account for his conduct? All that the scared inhabitants of the district could do was to talk—and that beneath their breaths—of the terrible "*disgrazia*" which had happened!

But "one of our citizens," journeying on his lawful business, happened much about that time to be passing through those parts—probably on his way to or from some of our trading friends at Genoa;—as indeed, in what parts, or at what time was there not "one of our citizens" passing in those days! "Our citizen" heard the terrible story; and on his return thought it as well to mention the circumstances to the *Magnifici Signori*, who sitting there in their palace, anxiously watching every movement, and listening to every breath from any part of all the horizon around them, never turned a cold shoulder to any who came to them with information of any kind. The Magnificent Signory gravely listens—gravely dismisses the informant, with thanks. Then Gonfaloniere Gino Capponi, the same who caused that luckless Ser Giovanni Malcometto to measure the distance from the battlement to the foundation of Ripafratta castle wall,—quietly sends for our trusty citizen Felice Brancacci, and gives him orders. Not that the Commonwealth could assert any rightful jurisdiction over the Marchese Malaspina and his castle. But it was asserted that the Lords of Verrucola were the *protégés* of the Commonwealth. At any rate, if Spinetta, as asserted, was held in durance in Pisa, she was there under the protection of Florentine law. In any case, Messer Brancacci, get you into the saddle, and go and look into the matter.

The Florentine special commissioner does not seem to have felt it to be necessary to take any escort with him in

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the first instance. He rides to Castel Aquila, and mentioning that he comes from the Signory of Florence, requests the Marchese to explain to him the circumstances of the deaths of the family of one of the "*raccomandati*" of the Commonwealth, and at the same time summons him to give up possession at once of the fiefs he had seized. A.D. 1419.

The haughty Marchese, not dreaming of refusing the jurisdiction of these tradesmen on the banks of the distant Arno, declares (of course) that the wretched bravo Maraccio is wholly and solely guilty of the horrible murders; and demurs to giving up either the heiress or the property, which he holds by virtue of the stipulated marriage. Our Messer Brancacci makes his bow;—carries back this reply to the Signory;—and without the loss of an hour starts again for the Val di Magra, with twelve hundred foot-soldiers and a body of cavalry at his heels. This force makes very short work of taking possession of the seventeen fiefs belonging to the murdered Marchese. But, as it was right that the Marchese Lionardo should be punished for his crime, his own castles and lands were also taken from him. Spinetta was discovered and brought to Florence. And the Florentine Signory, taking pity on her misfortunes and her unprotected position, made her a ward of the Commonwealth, and appointed a commission of six citizens to take care of her and her fiefs.

Such was the high-handed justice which the Commonwealth of Florence, "acting on information it had received," much like a nineteenth-century policeman, administered among its lawless neighbours, who could be made amenable to no other tribunal.

The presence of the Pope in Florence gave that quaint old chronicler Messer Giovanni Cambi abundant opportunity for describing, after the fashion of the extract cited above from his pages, the festivities and pageantries which he was so particularly fond of recording.

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A.D. 1419. On the morning of Easter Sunday, the 2nd of April, 1419, Pope Martin, grateful for the hospitality and good offices of the Florentines, did the Commonwealth the signal honour of presenting the Signory with the Golden Rose. From the earliest times * it had been the custom for the Roman Pontiff to present at Easter a Rose of gold to any Prince or Potentate whom he especially delighted to honour. It was, says Cambi, "a golden bough, with leaves of gold, very fine; and on it nine roses, and one bud above the nine; and inside it, there was musk, and myrrh, and balsam. The Gonfaloniere Barnardo di Castello was unfortunately too ill to receive it in person; so the Chairman of the Signory for the day, Taddeo Gherardini, received it on behalf of the Commonwealth instead. And from that day forwards the family of Messer Taddeo was called Gherardini della Rosa, in contradistinction from another family of the same name.

And Messer Taddeo took the Rose in his hands, and the Pope and thirteen Cardinals came out on the Piazza Santa Maria Novella; and the latter and the members of the Signory all got on horseback, and eleven Cardinals going in front, and two bringing up the rear, Messer Taddeo being in the midst, the procession thus formed made solemn progress through all the principal streets of the city, returning at last to the Palazzo of the Signory, when the Rose was placed in the chapel of the Palace, the position of which Cambi minutely describes in terms equally applicable to it at the present day.

On the 4th of May, there was more pageantry on occasion of the arrival in Florence of four schismatic Spanish Cardinals, created by Benedict the antipope, who had come to make submission to Pope Martin. They came with great state, and "were very rich, not having been to

* La Rosa d'Oro Pontificia, Racconto Storico da Carlo Cartari. Roma, 1681. P. 17.

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the Council at Constance to spend their money there." A.D. 1419. And these Cardinals also received from the Commonwealth presents of confections, and wax, and wine, and wild game to the value of fifty crowns each. Then Messer Alamanno Adimari, the Cardinal of Pisa, came, who was said to have mainly contributed to the election of the Pope, and was now made his Legate; and to him also was given a similar present,—"*il presente*," as honest Cambi writes it,—of the same value. And "Madonna Paghola," the lord of Piombino's wife, came, bringing her infant son, to visit the Pope, who was her brother. She presented him with a white horse, and a white ass, and two ostriches. And she also had fifty florins' worth of wax, and wine, and comfits, and game.*

But on the 13th of May happened the most striking incident of all the grand doings which the stay of Pope Martin in the city gave rise to. This was the arrival of poor John XXIII., the Pope who had been deposed by his own Council, who was now come to make submission to his more fortunate rival.

The first thing which it had occurred to Pope John to do, when he was declared deposed by the Cardinals and Bishops at Constance, was to run away. But the Emperor caught him and put him in prison; and only let him go when he had extorted forty thousand golden florins from him. (What business the un-poped Pope had to be in possession of such a sum is not very clear.) And now this poor plundered ex-pope was come to make his submission. He had been staying at Sarzana some time, afraid to come on to Florence, till Pope Martin would send him a safe conduct,—"*salvocondotto*," says Cambi;—which the Pope *in esse* was not very willing to do, fearing that his rival had some sinister object in coming near him.

* Cambi, Deliz. Erud. Tosc., tom. xx. p. 145.

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A.D. 1419. However, poor John XXIII. fell prostrate as soon as ever he came within sight of Pope Martin at Santa Maria Novella, and then going up to him, kissed his foot, and his hands, and lastly his mouth. And then Martin vouchsafed him his blessing; "and it was deemed a miraculous thing that there should be so much peace and concord!" *

The deposed Pope died in Florence on the 21st of the following December; and despite the plunder of the Emperor, left three thousand golden florins for his obsequies, besides other legacies amounting in all to twenty thousand florins.† The burial of him was a very magnificent affair, minutely described with great gusto by Cambi. All the members of the government were there with huge wax torches in their hands. There were eighty mourners clothed in black, each with his torch in hand, and the Cardinal di Trecorico, the nephew of the deceased, as chief mourner, in a full dress of purple; and candles all round the choir, and candles round the bier, and candles round the altar,—"thousands of pounds of wax!" And notwithstanding the three thousand florins left by the deceased to pay for all this, the funeral cost the Signory three hundred, and the Captains of the Guelph Party eighty.

At this time also, during the stay in the city of Martin V., Florence was made an archbishopric, having been up to that time a simple bishopric only. But it was felt that it was improper that the subject city of Pisa should bear a higher ecclesiastical rank than Florence,

* Cambi. Deliz. Erud. Tosc., tom. xx. p. 147.

† Giovanni de' Medici, the father of Cosmo, was one of his four executors. And the historian Ammirato remarks, that it is clear that there was no truth in the rumour, which was circulated afterwards, to the effect that the beginning of the enormous wealth of the Medici was due to vast sums obtained by Giovanni de' Medici from the fortune of the deposed Pope; inasmuch as a doubt is expressed in his will whether his property will satisfy all the legacies, amounting to not more than twenty thousand florins; and it was well-known moreover at the time, that Giovanni de' Medici was even then one of the richest citizens of Florence.

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"her liege lady and mistress." * And thus Amerigo Corsini, the fifty-first Bishop, became the first Archbishop of Florence. A.D. 1419.

The unwonted tranquillity which Florence had been enjoying for the last five years, ever since the death of King Ladislaus of Naples, and which, but for the unfortunate visitation of the pestilence, would have been a period of unbroken prosperity and happiness, was, at the close of the year 1419, disturbed by symptoms of coming troubles, And the earliest of these warning symptoms came in the strange guise of a formal treaty of peace.

The proposals for such a treaty came from Milan. Filippo-Maria Visconti sent ambassadors to Florence, full of all sorts of friendly and complimentary speeches; and—if it should please the magnificent Signori of the Commonwealth, their illustrious master was desirous of entering into a treaty of peace and friendship with the Republic;—he would feel more easy in his mind, seeing that however good friends they had been for some time back, the fact could not be denied that at present there was, formally speaking, only a truce between them, inasmuch as, at the end of the unhappy misunderstanding which had existed in the time of his father of blessed memory, things had been left between them, and had ever since remained on that footing. How great had been the blessing of the recent state of peace and tranquillity in Italy, all of them must have felt. And there was no reason for thinking that any power in the Peninsula had any wish to break it. They, the ambassadors, could at all events declare on the part of their illustrious master, that he at least had no desire to do so, being entirely minded to secure for his subjects and for himself the blessings of peace and repose.

And now, what does *this* mean? The shrewd old mer-

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Gonf. 768.



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A.D. 1420. chants and bankers sitting in the council-hall in the *Palazzo della Signoria*, did not in any wise like the look of it! What need of a treaty with this Visconti whelp, sly and treacherous as the serpent on his shield? Why not leave well alone?

The fact was, that when the late war between Florence and Milan came to an end, because the advance of the Visconti towards acquiring the sovereignty of all Italy had been effectually checked, and that haughty and ambitious family was no longer in a condition, after the death of Giangaleazzo, to carry on his far-reaching schemes of universal dominion, both parties had ceased to fight, but no formal peace had been made. Since that time the position of the Visconti affairs had considerably changed for the better. Once again all the power and possessions of that house were centered in one prince. After the death, by the hands of conspirators at Milan, of Giovanni Maria, the weaker of the two brothers, who had shared the inheritance of Giangaleazzo between them, the able Filippo-Maria remained sole master of all his father's vast states; and had shortly succeeded in extricating them from the condition of disorder into which they had fallen after Giangaleazzo's death. Now—at the opening of 1420—he was the possessor and wielder of as formidable a force as his father had ever held.

What was the object this powerful prince had in view, when he despatched ambassadors to Florence to ask the citizens to "make" a peace, which had been undisturbed for the last five years? What was to be gained, asked old Gino Capponi, from binding themselves by treaties to that which they might just as well practise without being bound at all? Was it not the object of the Visconti merely to make sure of Florence while he set himself to recover possession of all Lombardy, as his father had held it? Was it not to be feared that, when he should have accomplished

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that, he might see fit to turn his views towards Tuscany? Would it not be more wise, instead of granting the Visconti's request, rather to make a close alliance with Genoa at once, for the purpose of keeping down this natural enemy of the free Commonwealth of Florence? A.D. 1420.

There was a large party however in the government who thought differently. They urged that it was a folly to refuse what was certainly good in itself for the fear of future and uncertain possibilities. They pointed out not only that Filippo-Maria, even if possessed of all Lombardy, would not be in a position to menace Florence, as his father did when he had made himself master of Pisa, Perugia, Siena, and Bologna; but that Florence herself was now very much better able to resist any attack that might be made upon her, increased as her power had been by the possession of Pisa and Cortona. It is worth noting, that among the arguments put forward by those who held these views, it was urged, that if this peace were made at the request of the Duke of Milan, and if he were afterwards to do anything that might be construed to be a breach of it, and the Commonwealth should think it expedient to go to war with him, there would then be so good an excuse for doing so, that the populace would have no ground for their constant complaint that the governing classes in the Commonwealth went to war for the sake of increasing their own power and wealth.

The opinion of this latter party prevailed, and a formal treaty of peace was signed with Milan, the main article of which was, that the Duke of Milan should in no wise meddle with anything to the southward of the crest of the Apennine and the river Magra.

The new Pope, Martin V., still remained in his quarters in Santa Maria Novella; but his affairs were beginning to improve in such sort as to enable him to think of quitting Florence before long. The submission of two out of the



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A.D. 1420. three antipopes in the field at the time of his election, made it clear that there was no excuse for affecting to doubt any longer that he was the canonical and legitimate Vicar of Christ. And the King of Naples found it necessary to give up possession of Rome. An accord had been made also under the auspices of the Commonwealth between the Pope and Braccio Fortebracci, the greatest captain of his age, who in the spring of 1420 came to Florence to complete the arrangement, and to receive the Holy Father's orders. Braccio was received in the most distinguished manner by the Florentines. Jousts and public games were held in his honour; with processions and feasts and speeches in abundance. After a short stay in Florence, he was sent by the Pope to recover Bologna to the Church, which he soon afterwards accomplished.

On the 9th of September, Pope Martin left Florence for his own capital, then ready to receive him. And the Commonwealth paid him the same honours at his departure with which it had greeted him on his arrival, when he had come as a lack-land Pope, excluded from his own dominions. The debt of obligation, which Pope Martin owed indeed to the Florentines, was a heavy one. Nevertheless the Holy Father and the citizens did not part quite on such friendly terms as they had met.

When Fortebracci, the great captain, was in Florence, copies of verses had appeared in his honour one fine morning at all the street corners in Florence. But unfortunately the poet had thought fit in some way to contrast the warrior with the churchman who was employing his arms, in a manner unfavourable to the latter. And the little boys in the Florentine streets learned the offensive doggerel by heart, and were bawling them through the streets in a manner that could not fail to reach the ears of the Holy Father himself in his retirement amid the quiet cloisters of

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the Dominicans at Santa Maria Novella. There was some unlucky rhyme to the effect that A.D. 1420.

> "Papa Martino
> Non vale un quattrino," *

which seems to have annoyed the land-less Pope more than any such squibs ought, one would have thought, to have moved the anger of Christ's Vicar. No doubt the unlucky verse was dinned into his ears with insulting iteration; for its jingle took hold of the popular fancy to such a degree, that it has remained a byeword in the mouths of the Florentine *gamins* even to the present day. No doubt Pope Martin, excluded from his states, and owing an asylum to the hospitality of Florence, had not the means of spending money with that liberality which, whether in the case of Pope or Prince, is the best and surest title to the respect of both the noble and ignoble multitude.

"So, so!" the proud old Colonna was overheard muttering to himself. "Papa Martino is not worth a quattrino! Is he not? Well, well; we shall see, we shall see!"† And the Pope returned to Rome as much out of humour with the Florentines as the latest Pope did, when, in 1856, the descendants of those irreverent citizens would not go down on their knees in the streets of Florence, as the Holy Father was accustomed to see his Romans do in the streets of Rome. Pope Martin had even put the city under interdict, and shut up all the churches, in his anger, when that unwelcome doggerel rhyme was first screamed in chorus through the streets by the Florentine *gamin*-hood. But the awful suspension of all sacred rites and sights and sounds lasted only one day, from the 9th to the 10th of April; the Pope having been persuaded to remove the curse, and feeling probably some degree of shame at the

* Pope Martin is not worth a farthing.
† Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 773.

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A.D. 1420. contrast between the nature of the offence, and the nature of the punishment with which his ill-humour had led him to visit it.*

Nevertheless, after consecrating the church of Santa Maria Novella with a solemn service, which lasted from five o'clock in the evening of Saturday the 1st of September to midday on the following Sunday, and leaving a privilege of perpetual pardon with the high altar of that church, Pope Martin, though with a grudge at his heart, took his departure from Florence on the 9th with as much ceremonial pageantry as that with which he had been welcomed. "Four Florentine youths carried four hats before the Pope; the Podestà of Florence carried the square banner with the arms of the Church; the Captain of the People bore the other square banner with the arms of the Pope. The *Magnifici Signori* with their venerable colleagues, and the Captains of the Guelph Party, and the magistracies and the chapters of the Guilds, and a great number of citizens accompanied him under their banner as far as the gate of St. Piero Gattolino,† so that there were there five hundred couples of people. And then the Pope gave his benediction to the Signori, and they left him. But the Captains of the Guelph Party, with their banner and two hundred citizens, went with him as far as the Monastery of St. Gaggio.‡ And at his quitting the city they opened the entire gate, as had been done at his entry, which was thought by all that assemblage to be a great thing. And then the Pope dismounted at the church of St. Gaggio, and caused all the nuns to come to him, and gave them his blessing one by one, and kissed them on the head outside their veils; and having after this

* Cambi, Deliz. degli Erudit. Tosc. vol. xx. p. 149.

† The Porta Romana.

‡ A nunnery still existing about a mile outside the gate on the Roman road.

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rested awhile, he dismissed the captains and the citizens, giving them his blessing. God send him a prosperous journey!"* A.D. 1421.

And so the gossiping old diarist, who no doubt was one of the citizens who went to the Porta Romana that September morning to see the ceremonial of the Pope's departure, strolled home, thinking in all probability that it was just as well to have sped so expensive a guest on his homeward way.

It was not long before those who had conceived the strongest suspicions of the ulterior designs of Filippo-Maria Visconti had reason to point to events which were taking place in Italy as the proof of the justness of their views, and the Signory had cause to fear that the peace which had been so beneficial to the Commonwealth would not be of much longer duration. Before the close of the year 1421, tidings reached Florence that the Duke of Milan had made himself master of Genoa. It was bad news in every point of view, and specially as a foretaste of the worse that was likely to come ere long.

For yet a little while, however, the peace remained unbroken. Florence sent ambassadors to the Duke to complain; and he despatched others to Florence, charged to express the astonishment of the Duke that the Florentines should see any ground of complaint in what he had done, or consider him in any other light than that of a sincere friend to Florence. Much diplomatic bickering took place, but Florence only replied to the Duke's protestations of friendliness by quietly giving Braccio Fortebracci a retaining fee of two thousand golden florins a month, and binding him to be ready to serve the Commonwealth for two years certain from the day that he should be called upon to do so.

* Cambi, Deliz. degli Erudit. Tosc. vol. xx. p. 153.

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A.D. 1421. In the meantime the greatness, wealth, and prosperity of Florence was rapidly increasing, and manifesting itself in many directions. In the course of that summer the Commonwealth became the purchaser of the city and port of Leghorn from Genoa. The price paid was what seems the very inadequate sum of a hundred thousand golden florins. The reason assigned by the Genoese government to their own people for taking this step was the necessity of providing funds for resisting the forces of the Duke of Milan. But the Florentine historian* says that this was "the pretext" for the decision come to by the Genoese government. Probably the fact was, that in the difficulties in which the Genoese Republic was involved with Milan, the former had small hope of being able to retain a distant outlying possession which every geographical consideration more reasonably assigned to Florence.

The possession of this port was of the greatest advantage to the still extending foreign trade of the Republic. And the increasing wealth which resulted from it, and especially from the banking operations of the great Florentine firms, manifested itself in a variety of manners;—sometimes in the progress of civilization and art at home, and in the sumptuous adornment of the city by public works scarcely to be rivalled by the most powerful nations,—and sometimes in an amusing manner, by the eagerness of every sort of prince, potentate, body social, or individual, to pick up the crumbs that fell from her abounding table.

Of the first of these displays of wealth we have an instance in this year, 1421, in the commencement of that dome which has ever since remained, what its architect was bidden by the citizens to make it, the wonder of the world, unmatched and unrivalled in its kind.

"In the months of July and August they began to con-

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Gonf. 780.

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struct the Cupola; and Pippo, the son of Ser Brunelescho the goldsmith, was the head builder, with four superintendents of the works selected by the Woollen-mercers' Guild. And they began and proceeded with the work without any scaffolding."* A.D. 1421.

Of the second kind of testimony to the wealth of Florence, an amusing instance occurs about the same time. Monaco, on its lovely rock at the foot of the olive-covered mountains which rise almost immediately from the sea between Nice and Genoa, with its land-locked little harbour, belonged in those days to three brothers of the name of Grimaldi, who seem to have been little better than pirates, and to have lived by infesting the sea-coast and plundering the Genoese and Florentine coasting trade between Provence and the Mediterranean ports. One of these three brothers having seized some richly-laden Florentine galleys, the Signory sent envoys to make remonstrances and claims for restitution at Genoa, under the nominal suzerainty of which republic Monaco was. The Genoese government were willing to do all they could, but gave very little hope of being able to do any good in the matter. They, however, sent one of their own citizens, a Grimaldi, who was a relative of the Monaco outlaws, with the Florentine envoys to see what could be done. For a while the pirate avoided seeing them. But when he was unable any longer to avoid doing so, he told the Florentines that as to restoring the captured ships, that was quite out of the question, as he had long since sold them and spent the money;—that he could not do less than maintain his hold of Monaco, which was an ancient possession of his house; and he had no other means of doing so than taking the property of others, because he had none of his own;—that if the Signory of Florence

* Cambi, Deliz. degli Erudit. Tosc. vol. xx. p. 150.

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A.D. 1421. wished that he should give up the practice of robbing, the only thing he could suggest was that the Commonwealth should grant him a pension for his life. Otherwise he must continue to live as he had done hitherto!*

The extension of the Florentine trade to more remote districts than any which we might have expected to meet with, is curiously proved by an embassy sent during this flourishing period of peace to "the Soldan of Babylon," to make arrangements with that potentate for the currency of the Florentine coinage in his dominions. Ambassadors were about the same time sent for the same purpose to the Duke of Cephalonia, and to Antonio Acciaiuoli Prince of Corinth, himself the scion of a Florentine mercantile family.

Altogether, the years which elapsed from the death of Ladislaus of Naples, in 1414, to the beginning of the war with Milan, in 1423, were perhaps the most prosperous which Florence had ever yet seen. "At this period," says Ammirato, "there were counted seventy-two banks in the streets round about the Mercato Nuovo. It was estimated that the amount of gold currency in the city was upwards of two millions of florins. The value of the merchandise existing, of the credits in the public funds and other possessions, was something incredible."† Never had the silk manufacture, or that of cloth of gold, reached so great an extension as in these years. Art and literature were both cultivated as they had never been cultivated before in Florence. Filippo Brunelleschi, Lorenzo Ghiberti, Andrea Orgagna, Jacopo della Quercia, Filippo Lippi, Masaccio, Donatello, were adorning the city with the immortal works which, despite the more showy splendours of the subsequent century, have made this the grand period of art in all its branches. In literature,

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 779. † *Ibid.* lib. xviii. Conf. 786.

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Leonardo Aretino, the Secretary of the Signory, was already dignifying that appointment, to be rendered so illustrious in a subsequent age by Niccolò Machiavelli, and so many other names known to fame, by his sedulous and successful study and promotion of the study of the Greek and Latin writers. In almost every part of the world were to be found Florentines in positions of influence and power, as diplomatists, secretaries, bankers, captains. A.D. 1421.

It was a great time in Florence; and it may be said, probably with truth, that no single city, with the sole exception of Rome at its Augustan period, ever occupied so large a position in the world's eye, or exercised so great an influence on human culture and progress as Florence did at that epoch. Perhaps, too, we should not be wrong in considering these halcyon years of peace as the culminating point of the Florentine greatness. The vices,—not so much of the political constitution, as of the character of the people, and of the prevailing idea of a political and social organization,—which were then, and had been from the beginning, preparing the possibility of the material causes that finally destroyed all this prosperity and greatness, have been sufficiently insisted on. They were still in operation, though for the while somewhat latent. "Above all," says Ammirato, speaking of the flourishing condition of the Commonwealth at this time,—"above all, the city of Florence was rich in citizens venerable for their prudence and natural abilities, who having raised strong and high bulwarks against the violent encroachments of the populace, maintained the State in the utmost tranquillity and repose." * But in the midst of the repose of this happy period, an ominous name—ominous to us now, and which had begun to be so in Florence even then—had appeared again,—floating irrepressibly at the top of the tranquil

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 786.

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A.D. 1421. social waters,—among the Signory, which represented the majesty and directed the fortune of the Commonwealth. Giovanni, son of Everardo de' Medici, was one of the Gonfalonieri of 1421. This Giovanni was the common ancestor of all those more illustrious members of the great family, who descended from his eldest son Cosmo, surnamed *Pater patriæ* :—Lorenzo the Magnificent, the two Popes, Leo X. and Clement VII., and Catherine the Queen of France—she of the Bartholomew's-day massacre; —and of all the line of Grand Dukes, from Cosmo, who succeeded the murdered and childless Alexander in 1537, to the extinction of the family in Gian Gastone VII., and last Grand Duke of the race in 1737, who were descended from his second son Lorenzo.

That Giovanni de' Medici, then the father of those two young men, Cosmo and Lorenzo, in whom the entire future destinies of Florence were centred, was elected Gonfaloniere in 1421, by those prudent and able men, who had raised such a potent bulwark against the populace, for the conservation of the tranquillity of the State. But the causes why their prudence and ability led to no other end than that before us may be seen, not so much in the fact of this ominous Medici's election, as in the nature of the reasons given at the time by the most wise and prudent of those able citizens why he should not have been elected, and in the approving remarks on those reasons by the historian * who records them more than a century later.

Niccolò da Uzzano, who might be regarded, says Ammirato, as the foremost man in Florence after the death of Maso degli Albizzi, was urgent with the Signory that they should exclude the Medici from the election by unconstitutional tampering. Ever since Salvestro de' Medici had, at the time of the Ciompi riots, stood prominently

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Gonf. 781.

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before the city as the patron, leader, and defender of the people, the name of Medici had been proscribed by the dominant party, chiefly represented by the Albizzi, and had had no part in the honours of the government. But meanwhile, they had by no means been losing their position in the affections of the populace. At the time in question, when Giovanni, the son of Everardo, was made Gonfaloniere, the Medici were unquestionably the most popular of all the great families in the Commonwealth. They were also enormously wealthy. They had been rigorously excluded for the last thirty years from all the offices to which their position in the city would have naturally entitled them to aspire; and now it was given as a reason for excluding them longer, that there was reason to fear, that they might be inclined, if trusted with power, to revenge this exclusion on the authors of it. Niccolò da Uzzano, the great citizen, venerable for prudence and ability, urged that reason then; and the historian Ammirato, writing a hundred years later, by commission of Duke Cosmo, that Giovanni's descendant, still thinks that the reason was a wise and good one. Besides that, it was urged that it was especially imprudent to give this Medici access to the honours of the State, because he was an especially able man! Niccolò da Uzzano pointed out to the Signory, that this Medici was a man of far greater worth, both morally and intellectually, than Salvestro had ever been; and, *therefore*, it was particularly necessary to exclude him jealously from every position of influence or power! "He—Da Uzzano—failed not to show them other examples drawn from the annals of the Commonwealth, setting forth how great was the danger of drawing up (*tirar su*) a man who enjoyed so great and universal a reputation, and how easy a thing it was to prevent an evil in its beginning, and how exceedingly difficult to remedy mischief when it should have grown great and strong! He

A.D. 1421.

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A.D. 1421. showed that there were many capabilities and qualities in Giovanni de' Medici, which very much surpassed those of Salvestro; and that it, therefore, behoved them to consider well what it was they were putting their hands to."

And observe the reasons which, in the opinion of the historian, induced the men then in power to disregard the sage counsels of Niccolò da Uzzano:—

"But whether it were, that the citizens who had at that time the government in their hands, were envious of the greatness of Niccolò, and desirous of having some one to help them in beating him down; or that knowing well the nature of Giovanni, they did not anticipate from him any measure of cruelty, and bore in mind moreover that for a long time his branch of the family had stood aloof from that of Salvestro; or whether, lastly, knowing the strength of their own faction, they trusted to be able to repress any disorder that might arise—(*i. e.*, any attempt to work the constitution with sufficient fairness to endanger the governing monopoly of the dominant party)—they did not permit the matter to be taken out of its regular course; so that when the time came Giovanni de' Medici was drawn for Gonfaloniere."

It is very evident that the historian imagines, that if this "drawing up" of Giovanni de' Medici,—this bringing him out of the disenfranchised impotency of virtual proscription into the sunshine of office,—had been prudently avoided, all that followed might have been avoided also, and the Commonwealth be still existing in all its pristine glory at the time when he, the historian, was writing under the special protection and patronage of a despot Medicean Duke. And doubtless, it is possible enough, that had that fated progenitor of all the Medici been then sedulously depressed and kept from power, his family might not have been the instruments of the destruction of the Florentine liberty and constitution. But those who

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are in the habit of tracing the set of the current of human affairs to causes more deeply seated in the nature of things, more surely and regularly operating, and less easily altered, than the chance of this or that man's rise to or fall from power, will perceive that the ruin of the Florentine political system was involved in the prevailing faults of character and ignorances of the men who took such views as those described above of the nature of free government and of the means to be used for the preservation of it. A.D. 1421.

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## CHAPTER IV.

Commencement of renewed troubles with the Visconti—The Ordelaffi of Forli—The widow Lucretia Ordelaffi—refuses to ally herself with the Duke of Milan—Sends to Florence for protection—Simone degli Strozzi sent to reassure her—The Duke attacks Forli—War between Florence and Milan breaks out in May, 1423—The "Ten of Peace"—Florentines send an embassy to Milan before formally declaring war—Perfidy of Filippo-Maria—Florentine embassy to the Pope—That Pope's ingratitude to Florence—Envoys from the Marchese Niccolò of Ferrara to Florence—Archbishop of Genoa in Florence with messages from Filippo-Maria—Second Florentine embassy to the Duke—Growth of a force of public opinion in Italy—War finally determined on—Pandulfo Malatesta general for the Florentines—Various provisions made by the "Ten of War" for the coming contest—Alfonso of Naples stirred up to hostility against Visconti—The Milanese army gains possession of Imola—Another Florentine embassy to the Pope—As fruitless as the first—The irreverence of Braccio Fortebracci—Many other "Condottieri" hired by the Commonwealth—Opposition of the peace party in Florence—Omens—Bronze doors of the Baptistery—Death of Braccio Fortebracci—The "Ten of War" order their general, Carlo Malatesta, to give battle to the enemy against his judgment—and sustain a great defeat at the hands of the Milanese, on the 24th July, 1424—Historical parallel.

It soon became clear that the suspicions which the Florentines had conceived of the designs of Filippo-Maria Visconti were but too well founded; and that the unscrupulous ambition of that greedy and faithless family would once again plunge Italy into war, and put an end to the all too short interval of unbroken tranquillity, which Florence had for the first time in its existence enjoyed during the last nine years.

As usual, the coming storm broke not in the shape

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of any direct attack on any portion of the territory of the Commonwealth. That would have been an enterprise equally above the audacity and the power of the Lombard potentate. According to the traditional tactics of the ambitious princes of the Peninsula, and especially those of his own house, he began by a small encroachment, beyond the limits, which were in that age, and especially at Florence, understood to divide Lombardy and the Ghibellinistic princes and cities, from the Guelph populations and free cities of central Italy. Florence by no means made pretension to any sort of suzerainty over all the countries to the southward of this line. But she did consider herself interested and justified in very jealously watching any encroachment, or even any meddling with the affairs of the cities of central Italy by the despot princes of Lombardy. The "proximus ardet Ucalegon" was always felt to be a very strong argument in the council chambers of the *Palazzo della Signoria*. And the subjection of Bologna, Lucca, or Pisa, to a despotic ruler, would at any time have been felt as a sufficient cause for the armed interference of the Commonwealth. A.D. 1422.

Besides, in these latter times a great many of the petty rulers and lords of the smaller cities of Romagna, and of the little townlets among the Apennines, had become, as has been recorded in several instances, the formally recognised *protégés* of the great Republic. And Florence considered herself bound, no less by honour than by her own rightly understood interest, to protect all such from the assaults of any bigger tyrant.

Giorgio Ordelaffi, the Lord of Forli, was one of these "*raccomandati*" received under the protection of the Commonwealth, and recognised as having a right to claim it in any trouble. Forli is at the present day one of the half-score or so of thriving little episcopal cities, which lie in a line along the rich strip of alluvial plain between the



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A.D. 1422. foot of the Apennines and the Adriatic. The soil, which has been washed in the course of centuries from the friable flanks of the mountains for the formation of this narrow plain, is so rich, and the position between the seaboard and the fertile green slopes of the lower Apennines, offering almost every variety of climate within the circuit of a few miles, is so favourable in all respects, that nothing less than unintermitting efforts on the part of princes and soldiers, and popes and priests could make these towns other than thriving. For the last three centuries the priest has held them paralysed in a poisoned lethargy. Before that, fire and sword and the interminable quarrels of a swarm of petty more or less tyrant lords, worked constantly but less efficaciously for the destruction of all the good gifts of which Nature had been so lavish. To the reader of the several annals of these Romagna cities it seems that nothing could be much worse than their social condition under those native princelings;—it seems a wonder that they did not perish, even as Babylon and Palmyra have perished, and their rich territory around them become a desert. Yet the subsequent centuries showed that worse might be; and Florence was doubtless right in thinking,—even apart from the consideration of her own interests,—that it would have been worse with them under some distant Lombard despot of Milan or Verona, than was the confused, struggling, semi-independent sort of existence, which was theirs under their several lords.

Giorgio Ordelaffi, Lord of Forli, married Lucretia, the daughter of Ludovico Alidosi, *Signore* of the neighbouring, similarly situated, city of Imola, and died leaving an infant son named Tibaldo, and recommending his widow to place herself and her child under the protection of Florence, which had reckoned both him and the Lord of Imola among its "*raccomandati*." When, therefore, Filippo Maria sent

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envoys to the lady Lucretia, shortly after her husband's death, inviting her to enter into an offensive and defensive league with him, and pointing out the advantages that might arise to her from that course, the circumstance was considered a very grave one in Florence. Lucretia was, however, faithful to her Florentine connection. She thanked the Duke civilly for his offer, but informed him that both she and her son were "*raccomandati*" of the Commonwealth; and in all haste sent off an account of what had occurred to Florence, pointing out to the Signory the dangerous position in which she would find herself, if the Duke should send any troops into Romagna, inasmuch as the Forli people were all Ghibellines, "and therefore by their nature friendly to the Duke." The Signory instantly despatched Simone degli Strozzi to reassure the lady Lucretia, confirm her in her attachment to the Commonwealth, and promise her the aid and protection of Florence in case of need. And in all probability very little surprise was felt in Florence, when it very shortly became necessary to act up to the promise thus made. The Duke's reply to Lucretia's rejection of his proferred alliance was to send his general, Guido Torelli, with a few lances at his back, to take possession of Forli, a task which he accomplished without striking a blow, owing to the Ghibellinistic prepossessions of the inhabitants; and furthermore made the Châtelaine a prisoner in her own fortress. Assisted, however, by her friends in the city, Lucretia contrived to make her escape, and took refuge at the neighbouring little town of Forlimpopoli. A.D. 1423.

It was abundantly clear now that war with Milan was inevitable. Nevertheless there was a large party in the city, and at the head of it Giovanni de' Medici, which was anxious even yet to avoid, if it were possible, the necessity of a formal declaration of war. It was urged by this party that if Florence made the seizure of Forli a *casus belli*, the



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A.D. 1423. Duke would have little difficulty in finding some such colourable excuse, as would prevent many of those from becoming allies of Florence in the war, who would find themselves obliged to take that course if he—the Duke—should proceed to any more overt and undisguisable attacks on Tuscany. The contrary opinion, however, after long debates, prevailed; and on the 24th of May, 1423, a war board of ten, according to ancient practice, was appointed; and Florence was once again at war.

At the same time a "Ten of Peace" were named, in compliance with a rule to that effect which had been made in 1415, in the early days of the peace, which was now at an end. It is difficult to understand what, or whether any, were the duties and functions attributed to this magistracy. The resolution taken in 1415 was, that whenever a "Ten of War" should be appointed by the Commonwealth, a "Ten of Peace" should be chosen at the same time. And the institution would seem to have been rather a quaint sort of protest in favour of peace, and of the desire of the Commonwealth to live, if it could be allowed to do so, at peace with all its neighbours, than anything else.

Nevertheless it was determined, before taking the decisive step of formally declaring war, to send an embassy to the Duke to protest against what had taken place; to remind him that his aggression on Forli was an undeniable contravention of the late treaties, and to require him to give it up, and leave the guardianship of the widow and her heir to those to whom it rightfully belonged. The Duke sent back envoys to Florence, from whose communications it was clear only that Filippo Maria, an apt pupil of his father's tortuous and hypocritical school of policy, did not think that the moment for letting fall his mask had yet arrived. He protested that nobody could be more desirous of peace than he; that he would be perfectly ready to withdraw his troops from Forli if only he could

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be assured that there was no danger of molestation to friends of his in those parts, who had sought his protection; and that if the Signory would send ambassadors to Milan he doubted not but that everything could be peaceably arranged.* All which the Florentines clearly perceived was mere verbiage, destined only to gain time. A.D. 1425.

That it *was* such, was made more fully apparent by the result of another embassy to Pope Martin V., which had about the same time been confided to Marcello Strozzi, doctor of laws. If ever the ruler of one State was called upon to feel personal gratitude to the people of another, Pope Martin owed a debt of gratitude to the Florentines. It seems hardly possible to be supposed, that that silly rhyme of the little boys in the streets of Florence, which valued Pope Martin at less than a farthing, should have so rankled in the heart of that old man, as not only to have cancelled all the serious services and ungrudging liberality he had received from the Commonwealth, but to have been the directing influence which determined his whole course of foreign policy. But the fact was, that the Florentine envoy found him "inspired with ardent hatred of the Florentines." † It became very clear that he had been perfectly cognisant of all that had been done by the Duke in the Romagna, and that he and the Visconti entirely understood one another. He removed from Bologna a Legate who was known to be well disposed towards Florence, and replaced him by another Cardinal, notoriously in the interest of the Visconti. In short, as a contemporary diarist writes, the Pope seemed minded to raise and restore Ghibellinism throughout Italy, and to depress Guelphism everywhere.‡

These tidings from Rome came in confirmation of the opinion of those who thought that war was inevitable, and

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Gonf. 792. † *Ibid.*

‡ Ricordi di Giovanni Morelli, Deliz. Erudit. Tosc. vol. xix. p. 51.

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A.D. 1423. even in the present state of things desirable, as a provision against worse in the future. But still diplomacy had not yet said its last word. Envoys from the Marchese Niccolò of Ferrara, came to Florence, assuring the Signory that it was he and not the Duke who had seized Forli; and that he had done it because of the oppressive government of the Lord of Imola, who ruled there as guardian for the infant Ordelaffi; that the inhabitants had appealed to him, &c., &c. The Signory answered very shortly, that the forces which had seized the city were in the pay of the Duke of Milan; and that the demand of Florence was, that the Duke should in no wise meddle with the affairs of Central Italy, neither for one motive nor for another.

Then, almost before these emissaries had got their answer, the Archbishop of Genoa, passing through Florence on his way to Rome, on visiting in due form the Signory, told them that he had it in charge from the Duke of Milan to inform their Magnificences that he had taken possession of Forli only at the urgent request of the Pope, who wished to make use of that city as a convenient place of head-quarters for himself, in his necessary progresses through that part of Italy, and as a safe place of deposit for goods, books, documents, writings, and such like, belonging to the Apostolic Chamber. And scarcely had the archbishop departed on his Rome-wards journey, after gravely repeating this improbable story, than another envoy from the Duke presented himself, declaring that there was nothing that his master had so much at heart as to remain on good terms with the Florentines; and that as to this matter of Forli, he was ready to submit the affair to the arbitrament of either the Pope or the Venetians.

In reply to all this evidently contradictory shuffling, the Signory sent once again an embassy to Filippo Maria, charged to tell him, that by acting in manifest contravention of the terms of the treaties in vigour, he stained his

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own honour;—that there had not been wanting advisers who had urged on Florence the expediency of crushing him after his father's death;—that the Florentines had been well aware, that to allow him then to remain at peace was to permit him to make himself sovereign of all Lombardy;—that they had nevertheless chosen, in the interest of peace, not to interfere with him. But it was on the express understanding that he was to meddle in no way * with Tuscany, nor with Romagna, nor with Pontremoli,† nor anything to the south of it, nor with Bologna, nor with any lordship held by Braccio Fortebracci, and that he was to renounce unequivocally any right he had or might be supposed to have over any territory held by the Republic, or over Siena. And the Florentines were willing, on their side, to undertake that they would not in any way interfere with the affairs of Lombardy. A.D. 1423.

The uncompromising determination of the Florentines, not only to defend their own dominions, but to prevent Lombard interference in central Italy, is worth noting. The friendship which existed between the Commonwealth and Siena, was at no time a very cordial one; and the memories of bitter hostilities and rivalship made up the most vivid part of either city's knowledge of its neighbour. Nevertheless, Florence was as eager to protect Siena from the Visconti, as if it had been part of her own territory. Quarrel among themselves as they might, there was a fellow feeling among these free Tuscan cities, which impelled them, and especially Florence, the leader of them, and most enthusiastic of them in favour of liberty, to make common cause against Lombard aggression.

* "*Impacciarsi*,"—to mix himself up with,—to take a part in;—is the phrase used again and again in these diplomatic communications.

† A small town with its district, among the mountains between Parma and the Mediterranean coast, which in later times made a part of Tuscany politically, though it can hardly be considered to do so geographically.

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A.D. 1423. There is another aspect also in which these prolonged diplomatic intercommunications are worth notice. They bear evidence in a striking manner to the growth of public opinion in favour of peace,—to the nascent influence of an idea, that a heavy responsibility was incurred by those who wittingly and of their own accord plunged Italy into a state of warfare, and that it behoved a community to do everything in its power to show that it had gone to war unwillingly, and had the right on its side.

The Duke refused to admit to his presence the envoys charged with this last somewhat haughtily worded message; excusing himself from doing so on the pretext of certain symptoms of pestilence which had again recently shown themselves in Florence. The Florentine ambassadors were ordered to remain at Lodi; and commissioners were sent thither to hear what they had to communicate.

As might be supposed, nothing more came of this last attempt, than from those which had previously been made. And on the return of the Florentine envoys from Lodi, war was finally determined on, after a speech from Bartolommeo Valori, in the great council of the people, in which he said that it was absolutely necessary for the Commonwealth to recover Forli, and drive the Duke's troops out of Romagna, whether the necessary steps to that end might be called making war, or defending one's-self from injury, or any other name they might choose to give it, for the avoidance of that terrible one of war.

The Ten of War accordingly appointed Pandulfo Malatesta, General-in-Chief of the Florentine forces; and at once despatched him with orders to recover Forli. The bâton of his office was formally put into his hands by the Gonfaloniere, precisely four hours after sunset, on the 23rd of August, 1423; that being the moment which had been indicated as favourable for the purpose by the astrologers.

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The Ten were by no means content, however, with this. Looking out far and wide, they strove to raise up enemies to their adversary in every quarter. In the first place they wrote to Braccio Fortebracci, to ask if, in case the Commonwealth should need it, they could count on his services; and received an answer in the affirmative. They sent envoys to the Emperor, to the Swiss, and to the Duke of Savoy, endeavouring to move them to make war on the Visconti. "And some they encouraged to take that step by force of money, and some by pointing out to them the danger which would result to themselves from the overbearing power of the Duke, and some by flattering them on the score of Glory and Honour!" * The Signory endeavoured also to enlist Alfonso, King of Aragon, in their quarrel. This Alfonso of Aragon had been invited by Queen Giovanna of Naples to take her part against Louis of Anjou, who was still maintaining by arms his claim to the crown of Naples, as his father had maintained it against Ladislaus, Giovanna's brother and predecessor. Alfonso had warmly taken up Giovanna's quarrel, and it was understood that he was to be her heir. But dissension and misunderstanding having been put between them by those whom such an arrangement would have injured, Giovanna, with all a headstrong woman's violence, suddenly quarrelled with and discarded Alfonso, and made friends with and adopted Louis, her late enemy. The former did not, however, at all the more for this abandon his claim to the throne of Naples; and the rival pretensions of the Angevine and the Aragonese pretenders divided all Italy also upon this point. The Pope and Duke Filippo Maria held for Louis of Anjou. Braccio Fortebracci, the great free-lance captain, took the part of the Aragonese; and was at the time in question,—the

A.D. 1423.

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 794.

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A.D. 1424. autumn of 1423,—besieging Aquila on his behalf. And, of course, in the present conjuncture of circumstances, Florence also declared for King Alfonso. He was just then passing by Leghorn, on his way to his own dominions; and it was hoped in Florence, that with the assistance of the Republic he might have been induced to make some attack on the Duke in his newly-acquired possession, Genoa. But the troops intended for the purpose were not quite ready; the King was in too great a hurry to wait; and so nothing was done on that occasion save preparing the way for combined action in the future.

On the 22nd of October a new War Board of Ten was appointed, consisting as usual of eight members of the aristocracy and of two artisans; and the remainder of the year was passed in the most active preparations for continuing the war on a larger scale.

But the year 1424 opened unfavourably for the Florentine arms. The first news that came was, that the Milanese had gained possession of Imola, seized Alidosio, the lord of that city, who was under the protection of Florence, and sent him a prisoner to Milan. It was well known in Florence at the time,—at least after the news of the catastrophe had reached the city,—that the Lord of Imola had been warned years ago by the ghost of his father, that exactly this misfortune would happen to him at precisely this day and hour.* But this did not in any degree tend to mitigate the anger and mortification felt by the citizens at this further audacious step in advance made by the usurping Duke, which involved so direct an insult to the Commonwealth. Almost at the same time Fortimpopoli also fell into the power of Filippo Maria. And great discontent was felt in Florence at such an unfortunate commencement of the war.

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 796.

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A new embassy was sent off to the Pope, charged to set before him in the strongest light the danger which menaced the dominions of the Church from the advancing encroachments and ambition of the Duke of Milan. Bologna, it was specially pointed out to him, would not long be safe, unless the progress of the Visconti were effectually checked. And it might be possible enough, it was urged, to the united forces of the Papacy and the Commonwealth to do that now, which would be certainly far more difficult, and perhaps impossible, when Filippo Maria should have added to the means of strength already in his hands the possession of Bologna. A.D. 1424.

But the Pope was deaf to all these prudent considerations. He told the Florentine envoys that if Florence could protect Bologna it would be well,—well for the Commonwealth as well as for the Church,—that she should do so. But he said further, that it was more important to him, and occupied all the resources he was master of, to hold Aquila against Braccio Fortebracci, who was not only the most formidable military opponent in Italy, but was "esteemed an impious man in religious matters, who had been heard to declare that he would bring the Pope to such a pass, as to compel him to say an hundred masses for a penny!"*

Of course a Pope, let the course of worldly politics run as it might, could not do less than exert all his energies to put down such a fellow as this. The historian appears to admit the justice of this argument. But he adds that the truth was, the rhyme of the little boys in the Florence streets had not faded from the Pope's memory; and that the Holy Father had been heard frequently to say that the pride of the Florentines needed bringing down, and that it was well to let them be "macerated" a little by the Visconti.

* Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 796.

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A.D. 1424. Meanwhile the Ten neglected no means of strengthening the forces at the disposition of the Commonwealth. Once embarked in a war, which seemed likely to demand the exertion of every nerve in the body politic, Florence never counted the cost. Money was poured out, as if it had been pebbles from the bed of the Arno, for the attainment of the object in view, and the purchase of anything and everything that appeared likely to conduce thereto. Every "*Venturiere*" captain of reputation that could be had for money was taken into the pay of the Commonwealth. Ludovico degli Obizzi, from Lucca, Niccolò da Tolentino, Rinuccio Farnese, Christofano da Lavello, Orso degli Orsini from Monterotondo, all free-lance captains of renown, with larger or smaller followings of well-armed professional soldiers at their backs, were hired by the Republic. Above all, Carlo Malatesta, the Lord of Rimini, and elder brother of Pandulfo, who had previously been the Florentine General-in-Chief, was engaged to take the supreme command of all the forces of the Commonwealth and the general conduct of the war.

It is impossible to deny that "the Ten" were doing their utmost for the successful prosecution of the struggle. Nevertheless the opposition party, headed by Giovanni de' Medici, which, as has been seen, had from the beginning disapproved of the war, made capital of the misfortunes which marked the commencement of it, and constituted a strong peace party in Florence. And the views of this party were singularly confirmed and commended to the minds of the citizens by the sudden and unaccountable fall of one of the porphyry columns at the door of the Baptistery, on the 11th of March, 1424![*] It was picked up; and though broken in half by the fall, so that it was impossible

[*] Cambi, Deliz. Erudit. Tosc. vol. xx. p. 160; Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 797.

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to mistake the sense of the warning, was mended by a circle of iron around the broken part, as may be seen to this day; and "the Ten" and the Government party made as light of the untoward circumstances as they could. In order to show how little they suffered themselves to be discouraged by the portent, and how little the misfortune of foreign war could divert Florence from the work of embellishment and art-culture, which had recently made such marked progress in the city, on the 20th of that April, only nine days after the fall of the porphyry column, "the beautiful door of gilded metal, which cost more than twelve thousand crowns, and on which Lorenzo di Bartoluccio laboured for forty-four years,"* was put up. A.D. 1424.

But it became difficult for the supporters of the Government to meet the gloomy forebodings of the omen-expounders with sneer or scoff,—difficult even to keep up their own courage, and refuse to read coming evil in the portent of the fallen column,—when in the following June came tidings of the death of Braccio, who had been killed before Aquila on the 4th of that month;—Braccio the famous captain, in whom Florence had placed so much of her hope,—and to whom she had paid so many good golden florins as a retaining fee for his services in the day of need!

And indeed it soon became only too clear that the most gloomy interpreters of the omen of the porphyry column had by no means exaggerated its true significance. The Government and "the Ten of War" had comforted themselves and the citizens with the consideration of the very superior body of forces which they had now in the field. The Duke had replied to these reinforcements of the Florentine army by sending Agnolo della Pergola, a general

* Cambi, Deliz. Erudit. Tosc. vol. xx. p. 160; Ammirato, lib. xviii. Conf. 797.

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A.D. 1424. of great reputation, with fresh forces, to Forli. But the Florentine army was still much the superior in numbers. Carlo Malatesta had also with consummate skill chosen a position of great strength before Forli, from which it was thought that it would be impossible to dislodge him. The Ten had, moreover, engaged the Conte Albergo of Zagonara to annoy the enemy by constantly harassing sorties from his fortress of that name in the neighbourhood of Forli. But Agnolo della Pergola, finding that his troops suffered from these attacks, determined to turn his immediate attention to Zagonara, and laid close siege to it. It became evident that, if not succoured by the bulk of the Florentine forces, Zagonara must fall; and tidings to that effect reached Florence. Thereupon the Ten, who found it very desirable to have some achievement,—some success to content the people and put them into good heart about the war, and who feared that the fall of Zagonara and the ruin of an ally who was fighting under the banners of the Commonwealth would excite great discontent in the city,—sent very pressing orders to Carlo Malatesta to march out from his position to the relief of Zagonara. They had already been sending forward fresh reinforcements of troops, one on the heels of another, and urgent recommendations to him to press forward the siege of Forli; and now they peremptorily ordered him to succour Zagonara at all cost. Carlo Malatesta was very unwilling to quit his position, and he was supported in this opinion by all his officers. But fresh letters came from Florence, upbraiding him with his inactivity, and positively commanding him to go to the relief of Zagonara.

Thus urged, he went, against the dictates of his own judgment; and having met with the additional misfortune of bad weather, which caused his forces to arrive before Zagonara wet, tired, and worn out with a night march through a flooded country, he was, together with the whole

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Florentine army, entirely routed by Agnolo della Pergola and the Milanese troops on the 24th of July, 1424. A.D. 1424.

"This," says Ammirato, "was the famous rout of Zagonara, celebrated rather for the number and rank of the prisoners taken than for the quantity of the blood spilt." Ludovico degli Obizzi and Orso Orsini were killed, the first fighting at the head of his men, the second drowned in crossing a stream. Carlo Malatesta himself was taken prisoner, and three thousand two hundred horsemen were disarmed. Pandulfo Malatesta, with twenty-five horsemen only, escaped to Cesena, and Niccolò da Tolentino with forty to Orivolo. And it was calculated in Florence that the money-cost of the disaster, in addition to the loss of prestige, which could not be so estimated, amounted to more than three hundred thousand golden florins.

It is impossible to read this account of the ill-judged interference of a council of republican civilians, sitting at a distance from the seat of the war, with the operations of the general employed by them to conduct it, and of the disastrous consequences of that interference, without being reminded of the singularly parallel combination of circumstances which has so recently been seen producing similar results on the other side of the Atlantic. There also pressing orders from home, motived by the same necessities of a republican Government, have overriden the better judgment of generals placed in command for the very purpose of doing efficiently that which the impatience, the ignorance, or the jealousy of the Government at headquarters insists on doing with such inevitable inefficiency as must lead to the same results which followed from the same causes four hundred years ago. But the parallel is not to be brought to a close yet. The republican Government on the banks of the Arno was not made wiser by the misfortune it had brought upon itself. But the re-

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A.D. 1424. publican Government on the banks of the Potomac will not refuse to profit by their own experience, or by the additional teaching which history has stored up for them.

Whether any profounder lesson than that which regards the due relationship between the home Government and a general in the field may be drawn from the singular closeness and accuracy of this historical parallel, must be left to the judgment of speculative political students.

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## CHAPTER V.

The Milanese general fails to push his advantage—Dismay in Florence—Call of the Great Council—Giovanni de' Medici—Money-making habits in Florence—Results of the commercial constitution of Florentine society—Giovanni de' Medici lays the foundation of the Medicean influence—His intrigues—Measures taken for the renewal of the war—A third embassy to the Pope—Still in vain—Embassy to the Venetians—Equally fruitless—Giovanni de' Medici ambassador to Venice—The year 1424 opens gloomily in Florence—Piccinino, general for Florence, compelled by "The Ten" to execute a movement in opposition to his own judgment, is utterly defeated—Great lamentation, but no thought of submission in Florence—Manfredi of Faenza, counselled by his prisoner, Piccinino, deserts the Duke and joins the Florentines—"Parole" system prevailed at this time—Piccinino recovers his liberty—Financial difficulties and plans in Florence—The war divides itself into two branches—Florence on the offensive on the coast of Genoa—Number of feudal chieftains in the pay of Florence—Successes on the Genoese coast—The main struggle of the war was before Faenza—Sforza general for the Duke—The summer passed in skirmishing—Scene of the war changes to the upper valley of the Tiber—Great defeat of the Florentines at Anghiari; and again at Faggiuola—Funeral of Rinaldo Gianfigliazzi—Piccinino deserts the Florentine service—A fourth embassy to Pope Martin—Again fruitless—Another embassy to Venice meets with better success—Alliance signed between Venice and Florence—Patriotic conduct of the Florentines—The power of Florence essentially a money power—Financial strain in Florence—Tide of fortune changes in the war—Whether it was best for Italy that the Visconti were foiled in their purpose?—Brescia taken from the Visconti—Other matters go against Visconti—Pope Martin sends envoys to Florence in his interest to make peace—Florence desirous of peace—Peace signed on the 30th December, 1426—Visconti refuses to abide by the hard terms of peace granted to him—War breaks out afresh—Results of this second war still more disastrous to the Duke—Great battle of Cremona—An undecided battle—Another great battle on the same ground in the autumn is a decided victory for the allied Republics—Filippo-Maria reduced to wish for peace—Which is signed 18th April, 1428.



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A.D. 1424. Had Agnolo della Pergola pushed on immediately after this great victory to Florence, it might have gone hard with the Arno Queen. But his army, busy as usual in securing the spoils of their late victory, let slip the golden opportunity till it was too late to attempt so great an enterprise. All that was accomplished as a sequel to the great victory was the capture of two or three frontier fortresses.

Nevertheless, the dismay and indignation in Florence were extreme;—dismay at the prospect before the Republic with neither generals nor troops to oppose to the powerful and ambitious enemy they had defied and attacked;—indignation against the aristocratic party in the government—which at that time was nearly equivalent to saying the government in its entirety—on whom the responsibility of the war rested. "In the shops," says Ammirato, "in the churches, in the *piazze*, at the street corners, in every place where men are gathered together, the loudest spoken and most violent abuse of the government was heard." * The rulers of the Republic were especially blamed by the popular party for not having assisted Genoa to resist the invasion of Filippo-Maria, and allied itself for offence and defence with that republican community with which Florence was so closely connected by commercial interests and political sympathies. Had that policy been adopted, it was urged, when the Duke of Milan first manifested the recklessness of his ambition by attacking and eventually destroying the liberties of that Republic, it would have been an easier task to curb his power.†

The discontent in the city was rapidly reaching a point

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 799; Machiavelli, edit. cit. vol. i. p. 237.

† "Besides this," says Machiavelli, in words copied, without acknowledgment as usual by Ammirato, "they"—the populace—"said all those things which a people is apt to say in its anger."—Machiavelli, edit. cit. vol. i. p. 237.

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which would have been dangerous to the existing order of things in Florence, and the Gonfaloniere Bencivieni determined to summon the Great Council, a step which would seem to indicate that the government felt that they had a good case to lay before the people. And in fact Rinaldo degli Albizzi, who, as the eldest son of Maso, aspired to succeed to his father's influence and standing in the city, made a speech (reported by Machiavelli and Ammirato with such differences as show that neither of them is giving the real words absolutely used, but in a manner indicating the importance attributed to it), which had the effect of calming and, for the moment at least, pacifying the people. It has been already mentioned that Giovanni de' Medici had placed himself at the head of the peace party, and there can be no doubt that he was busy at this time in turning the popular discontent at the war to good account, and laying the foundations of that widely spread influence which was afterwards wielded with such overpowering effect, and to such permanent results, by his descendants. A.D. 1424.

This Giovanni may be considered as having laid the foundation of the political power of his family on that solid and deeper foundation of vast wealth which had been prepared by his father Averardo the banker, who is known in the pages of the contemporary chroniclers by the nickname of Bicci. It would be greatly to misunderstand the nature and character of the old Florentine society to suppose, even if the facts of the matter were not all as perfectly well known as they are, that Giovanni the son of Averardo ceased to be a money-making banker, because he inherited a large fortune ready made, and "entered into political life," as the phrase would go now-a-days. Had he done so his influence in the hive of working bees, as well as his stock of honey, would soon have been exhausted. It was the peculiarity of the Florentine social



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A.D. 1421. system, that the men, who were conducting a policy which, whether in war or in peace, influenced that of all Italy commandingly, and that of most parts of Europe sensibly; —who were directing the operations of generals in the field; sending embassies, and going as ambassadors to all the governments of the civilized world;—who were patronising arts and letters, and in many instances making for themselves an imperishable reputation by the culture of these pursuits;—that these same men were at the same time working bankers and shopkeepers, assiduously labouring to increase that individual and social wealth on which the greatness of their Commonwealth was based.

Equally would it be an error to imagine, that the causes of the downfall of this social system,—attributed in these pages, as the reader is aware, to quite other sources,—might be found in the fact that the greatness and the power of it had been based and raised on the foundation of commercial wealth. There were littlenesses, meannesses, and ignoble short-comings enough to be found in the old Florentine world, as in others of mortal mould. But they were very essentially other than such as are commonly supposed to be fostered or engendered by the pursuit of trade. One of the important truths which the study of this Florentine society is calculated to teach is, that the notions which have prevailed on this subject among ourselves, have been generated solely by the old root-ideas implanted deep down in the constitution of our minds by the feudalism which nursed our social system in its infancy and period of youth, and by the position which that social system has made for traders in conformity with those ideas. No wealth was ever spent more liberally,—using that word in its best and largest sense,—more generously, more for public and less for private objects, more unselfishly, than that of the Florentine traders and shopkeepers. None was ever amassed by more

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honest and upright industry.* Even those other minor flaws of character, which we have been led to associate with the pursuit of trade, such as a too great proclivity to the occupations and habits of town rather than of country life, an unfitness for the healthy activities which insure the *mens sana in corpore sano*, and the continuance of a race undegenerate in type of either mind or body,—even these, which the habitudes of Italian life at the present day might confirm us in supposing to be the necessary concomitants of a trader's life, will be found on examination not to have existed in the flourishing times of the old Florentine commercial activity. All that miserable ineptitude and dislike for every form of bodily activity, which now so unfortunately characterises the inhabitants of Italian cities, has been the product of after-times, of a wholly different condition of society, and in a great measure has been due to the influence of the Spanish manners and modes of life, which were so largely imported into Italy at a subsequent period, to its infinite and incalculable injury. In a word, trade was noble in mediæval Florence; and the lives and virtues and faults of those prosperous traders prove very conclusively that there is no intrinsic incompatibility between their pursuits and the truest social as well as personal nobility. A.D. 1424.

Giovanni de' Medici accordingly, while laying the foundations of a political power which was to be the stepping-stone to sovereignty, continued to work at the ledgers of the bank, and to increase the already accumulating masses of the Medicean wealth. There is reason to suspect that

* Abundant proofs of the correctness of this assertion are to be found in the curious and minute provisions of the various guilds for the preservation of the high and unimpeached character of the Florentine trade and manufactures. It would lead to a digression far too long to be compatible with the plan of this work, to attempt to place these proofs before the reader in detail. Much curious information on this head may be found in Professor Giudici's excellent History of the Italian Municipalities.

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A.D. 1424. even then this wealth was being used not only indirectly but directly in the promotion of political influence. Old Gino Capponi, the chronicler, who has been so often quoted, hints as much; and the probabilities are in favour of such having been the case; but it may be necessary to accept with caution such insinuations from a member of the adverse political party. Giovanni was a prudent and cautious man, as we shall have further occasion to see presently; and while profiting in his position of popular leader, by the inheritance of his cousin * Salvestro de' Medici's frank espousal of the democratic interests and party at the dangerous crisis of the Ciompi rising, had kept himself so far aloof from that branch of the family as to permit of his having been made Gonfaloniere, as we have seen.

There can be little doubt that Giovanni de' Medici was fomenting the discontent which the unfortunate commencement of the war had raised; and that it was very far from being dissipated, although it was appeased by the able speech of Rinaldo degli Albizzi, sufficiently to permit the government to give all its energies to the carrying on of the war. The remains of the routed army were collected, re-armed and re-organized. Messengers were sent to Oddo, a natural son of Braccio Fortebracci, and to Niccolò Piccinino, who was considered the most promising of all those who had learned the art of war under his standard; and both were engaged, the latter to take the command of the Florentine forces, and to bring four hundred lances with him.

Of course more money was needed for all this,—more, and more money, and plenty of it! A new loan of fifty thousand golden florins,—by which, as in every case, is to be understood a forced contribution from the citizens to be repaid at a given time,—was decreed; and additional

* Giovanni's father and Salvestro were descended from the same great-great-grandfather. Salvestro's descendants became extinct in 1687.

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burthens were imposed on the people. Another embassy was sent to the Pope, to see if, now that Braccio who had been opposed to the Papal forces at Aquila was dead, Martin could be induced to make common cause with Florence for the protection of the interests of the Church in Romagna. This mission was undertaken by Rinaldo degli Albizzi and one of the Guadagni family. And they strove hard to induce the Pope to see that his own interest, if not any feeling of gratitude toward Florence, should counsel him to make head against the progress of the Visconti arms, while it might yet be possible to do so. But it was all in vain. Either the Holy Father's grudge against Florence was so fierce that her danger and distress were more grateful to him than the contingent danger to his own possessions was terrible,—or else he thought that his own Ghibellinism would save him from hostility or injury on the part of the Duke of Milan. It was true, he said, that Braccio was dead; but what was the good of that, if Florence by patronising his son and his pupil was going to raise up another in his place. Aquila, it was true also, had been saved; but he had not recovered Perugia; (which Braccio had obtained possession of;) and, in short, he would do nothing.* A.D. 1424.

Another embassy was sent to the Venetians; and it is difficult to understand how that usually far-seeing and sagacious government should have failed to perceive that it was at least equally vital to them and to Florence that the career of Filippo Visconti should be checked, and his overgrown power restrained. The Venetians, however, replied to the Florentine legates, Giovanni de' Medici and Palla Strozzi, that they were bound by a treaty of peace with the Duke of Milan; and that he had done nothing which they could consider a legitimate ground for breaking it.

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 801.

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A.D. 1424 It is a significant fact worthy of notice, that this important embassy to Venice should have been entrusted to Giovanni de' Medici. A few months before, it was a great question, as we saw, whether he were not too great a radical to be entrusted with the Gonfaloniereship. The more conservative of the government party had been anxious to exclude him from it. Now the same Signory, which gives the embassy to Rome to Rinaldo degli Albizzi, the most prominent man of the ultra-aristocratic party, gives that to Venice at the same time to the much-dreaded Giovanni de' Medici. It seems clear that the popular element was once more gaining strength; and we shall, in little more than a year from the present time—the close of 1424—see the results of that displacement of political power.

The remainder of the year passed in making the above preparations for carrying on the war by their own unassisted forces, and in fruitless endeavours to induce some ally to join them. The Christmas of 1424 was a very gloomy one in Florence; and the following year opened as disastrously as its predecessor had done.

For the Florentine government would seem to have learned nothing by the misfortune of Zagonara. The "Ten of War" still insisted on directing the war from their Florentine council chamber, and on issuing orders to their general, overriding his own judgment.

Piccinino was guarding the frontiers of Tuscany with such an army as the Commonwealth with the assistance of his personal followers had been able to put together; and thought himself accomplishing much in preventing the enemy from making any advance. But "The Ten" thought otherwise. Guido Antonio Manfredi, Lord of Faenza, was taking part with the Ducal forces, and had refused a proposal of the Florentine government to ally himself with the Commonwealth. This angered the government greatly;

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and they sent orders to Piccinino and Oddo Fortebracci to march at once against Faenza. These leaders remonstrated against the orders. They represented that the season was a very severe one; that it was hardly the time to lead an army across the Apennines; that they would have to pass a very dangerous defile called Valdilamona; and they much feared the result, if it should be attempted. A.D. 1425.

The Ten, sitting within the ten-feet-thick walls of their Palazzo, in the storm-sheltered Valdarno, thought little of such motives for delay as their generals urged. There was no snow in Valdarno! No storm winds were heard in the Florentine council-rooms! And they sent back his messengers to Piccinino with the most pressing and imperative orders to march instantly against Faenza. The general did as he was bid; was attacked precisely as he had foreseen in the Valdilamona; and, fighting under circumstances of desperate disadvantage, utterly and hopelessly routed.

Oddo Fortebracci was killed on the field; and there were dark stories in Florence at the time, which insinuated that this would not have so happened without the connivance and management of Piccinino, who was anxious, as the authors of such tales asserted, to get the young man out of his way, that he might remain sole leader of all the troops under the Fortebracci standard. But when it is remembered in what sort of mood the news of that disastrous first of February,—that was the date of the rout of Valdilamona,—must have been received in Florence, it will seem not unlikely that any story to the disadvantage of the unsuccessful general may have gained currency and credence, however little foundation it may have had to rest on.

Niccolò Piccinino himself, as well as his son Francesco, and the Count Niccolò Orsino, together with a large number of captains and men, were marched prisoners to

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A.D. 1425. Faenza; and thus a second Florentine army was destroyed within six months.

Great was the dismay and lamentation with which the tidings of this new misfortune were received in Florence; but it does not seem to have produced for an instant any shadow of an idea of submitting, even among those who had been from the beginning opponents of the war. Since war had been made, and blows had been struck, there was no course to be thought of save to fight it out. And just when the popular feeling was at the gloomiest, messengers reached Florence, charged with a proposal to the government, which not only materially cheered the citizens, but almost induced them to think that the late defeat had been more serviceable to the Commonwealth than a victory would have been, and that Piccinino had shown himself more useful in his prison than he could have been in the field, even if victorious.

This proposal was nothing less than an application from the Conte Manfredi of Faenza, the late victorious enemy of the Commonwealth, to be admitted to alliance with Florence. Piccinino, whose imprisonment in Faenza was merely nominal, and who had lived on terms of intimate acquaintanceship with his captor, had in the course of the long conversations on the war and the probable future of it, which naturally formed the occupation of the idle hours the season compelled both generals to pass in mutual inactivity, so impressed Manfredi with the superior vitality of the Florentine cause, and the Florentine power, as to lead him to think that he had made a mistake in taking the side of the Visconti. Of course, the small princes in the position of Manfredi of Faenza were solely guided in similar matters by consideration for their own safety. If they took the winning side, it might be well with them. But if they identified themselves with the losing party, it was pretty sure to go hard with them,

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whatever might be the ultimate arrangements of peace between the more powerful principals in the quarrel. Piccinino reminded him of the fate that had befallen the Tarlati, the Ubaldini, the Contiguidi, and other chieftains who had taken the Ghibelline side in politics against Florence in the olden time,—how, one by one, they had fallen beneath the constantly-increasing power of the great Commonwealth, however much that power may have appeared the weaker at the time they elected to take part against it. He pointed out to him how surely the greatness of princely houses, which depended on the ability and energies of an individual chieftain, was subject to periods of depression, if not to absolute and final ruin, whenever death cut short the career of the man on whose personal prowess their greatness depended; while, on the other hand, the Republic never died, never changed its views and aims, and above all, never forgot its enmities. More especially, he advised him to take warning by the more recent and more notable example of Pisa;—a community which, from having once been more than the equal in power of Florence, had, in consequence of having chosen to rely on the Emperors, and in later times on those very same Visconti, as a support against the Guelphism and popular power of its rival, fallen to the position of a subject provincial city.* A.D. 1425.

The Count Antonio Manfredi was so much impressed by the arguments of his prisoner, that he threw himself into his saddle, and rode off at once to Milan, where his kinsman Carlo, the Lord of Pesaro, was then a prisoner, in order to consult him on the subject. It would seem that the imprisonment of the latter at Milan was not more rigid than that of Piccinino at Faenza;—a system of *parole* having, as we may gather, superseded the more

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 802.

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A.D. 1426. barbarous plan of securing a prisoner of war by walls and bolts;—and that the Lord of Faenza had no difficulty in talking with his relative in that secure privacy which the nature of their conversation demanded. The Count Antonio found that the opinion of his uncle Carlo entirely agreed with that of his prisoner Piccinino; and the result was, that on the 25th of February an alliance, offensive and defensive, was ratified between the Commonwealth and their late enemy.*

Of course it followed that, by the same arrangement, Piccinino recovered his liberty, and was again disposable and at the service of the Commonwealth.

All this brightened the face of things not a little in Florence, and in some degree reconciled the people to the war. Still the main difficulty was to raise supplies in such a manner as would be the least distasteful to a community which had not yet learned to submit to any regular system of taxation. And one of the financial schemes adopted for the purpose was sufficiently remarkable to be worth mentioning. A special "*Monte*," or fund, was created for the granting of marriage portions to young men or maidens. Every contributor to this fund had the right of naming a male or female child, to whom a sum five times the amount of that subscribed was to be paid on their marriage, at a date of not less than fifteen years from that of the subscription to the "*Monte*." Should the nominee die in the interval, all right was lost, to the profit of the "*Monte*." It is observable, that no provision is made for the case of the nominee not entering at all into the marriage state, as if this was a contingency not worth contemplating.

During the early months of this year, 1426, the war divided itself into two entirely separate branches;—one in

* Machiavelli, edit. cit. vol. i. p. 246.

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which Florence assumed the offensive on the coast of Genoa; and the other in which she stood on the defensive at and around Faenza, which city was, as Ammirato justly remarks, the bulwark of Florence during the whole of this war. A.D. 1426.

The contest on the *Riviera* of Genoa was carried on mainly by means of the allies of the Commonwealth. Although, when in the preceding autumn the King of Aragon had passed by Leghorn on his way back from his Neapolitan wars to his own kingdom, the Florentines had not been able to induce him to undertake anything against Genoa, which city was now, it must be remembered, a part of the dominions of the Visconti, Don Alfonso had promised to send his brother, Don Arrigo, with a fleet of galleys for his service. In the following spring, accordingly, Don Arrigo arrived off Genoa with twenty-three galleys; and the Florentines, contributing assistance of their own, persuaded Tommaso Fregoso, the dispossessed Doge, that then or never was the moment for him to attempt the recovery of his lost sovereignty. Fregoso had, when driven from Genoa, remained Lord of Sarzana, a town on the coast on the frontier of Tuscany, and he had a considerable number of partisans among the population of the *Riviera;* so that his presence and name contributed much to the success of the expedition. He was also able to bring as allies to the cause the great family of the Fieschi, who possessed many castles and strong places along the coast. One of these, the Conte Antonio Fiesco, the Lord of Lavagna, a little town with a strong castle on the coast, a few miles to the south of Sarzana, and of Pontremoli, a more inland town among the mountains, became a "*raccomandato*" of the Commonwealth, with the understanding that he was to furnish ten lances and three hundred infantry during the war, and was to receive two hundred florins a month as long as the contest lasted.

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A.D. 1426. This was only one of a number of similar arrangements made during these months by the Commonwealth. A whole swarm of little independent nobles, the lords of towns or isolated fortresses of more or less importance, thus offered themselves and were accepted as "*raccomandati*" of the Republic. In fact, the term was only another phrase signifying that they and their retainers were hired by the Commonwealth to fight its battles for it. An important war between the great commercial Republic and any one of the other more powerful states of Italy was a harvest-time for these small independent nobles, whose only revenue lay in their swords and the sinews of their vassals. It will be observed, that in the case of the smaller and poorer of these, as in this instance of the Count of Lavagna, the number of lances—*i. e.*, mounted men of arms of a somewhat superior class—becomes very small in proportion to that of the infantry, "*fanti*,"—the word from which the English term is derived, which meant, as it means in Italy to this day, "servants;" and who consisted in fact of as many of the sons of the soil belonging to the land around his castle as the lord could afford to maintain.

The expedition thus organized against Genoa was in a great measure successful, gaining possession of several places along the coast, although it did not succeed in taking Genoa itself.

But the main struggle of the war was before Faenza, now held for the Florentine cause. The Duke had recalled Agnolo della Pergola, and sent Guido Torello, and shortly afterwards Francesco Sforza, the most celebrated general of the day, since the death of Braccio, to take the command of the Milanese forces. Florence had made Sforza very tempting offers; but he had been induced by the Pope, still animated by his spite against the little street-boys who had said that he was not worth a farthing, to accept less splendid conditions from the Duke; "being

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perhaps also drawn to Lombardy," says Ammirato, "by what the vulgar call destiny," seeing that future greatness awaited him there. A.D. 1426.

During the spring and summer, the war continued in the district around Faenza; but the two great captains, Sforza on the part of the Duke of Milan, and Piccinino on that of Florence, were neither of them able to accomplish anything of much importance. Continual skirmishing took place, and the amount of success in these inconclusive encounters was pretty equally divided between the two armies.

Nevertheless, more money was wanted; and the Signory was obliged to decree two new loans, of a hundred thousand florins each, the contribution to the one payable on the 15th of July, and to the other on the 15th of August. And any citizen, to whom a portion of the loan had been assigned, and who had not paid it on those days, was to be declared ineligible to any office, to be enrolled among the "*grandi*," and to be incapacitated from pleading before any tribunal.

In the autumn, the field of war was changed, in consequence of a circumstance characteristic of the manners of the time. The people of Anghiari, a small town among the hills, in the upper valley of the Tiber, a dozen miles or so to the north-west of Arezzo, taking advantage of the confusion of the times caused by the war, thought it a good opportunity to plunder their neighbours on the other bank of the river, the people of Borgo San Sepolcro. The latter, unable to protect themselves, and not being protected by Florence in consequence of all her attention being occupied with more important matters, "gave themselves," as the phrase went, to the Duke of Milan. The Milanese troops, nothing loth to profit by such an invitation, began to stream across the mountains in such numbers, that by degrees the main body of the

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A.D. 1426. war was removed from Romagna to this upper valley of the Tiber. Though the infant river is here but a small stream, the valley at this point opens out into a wide flat plain, once doubtless the bottom of a lake, in which both Anghiari and Borgo San Sepolcro are situated, at a distance of some half a dozen miles from each other, each at the foot of the hills enclosing the plain, and with the stream of the Tiber between them. There at last, on the 9th of October, a great battle was fought, which once again resulted in a total rout of the Florentine army; and eight days afterwards an attempt to retrieve that misfortune led to another crushing defeat. The first of these battles is known in Italian history as the rout of Anghiari; the second, from the name of a small place in the neighbourhood, the rout of Faggiuola.

Four great battles had now been fought during this war, those of Zagonara, of Valdilamona, of Anghiari, and of Faggiuola; and in every one of them the Florentines had been thoroughly defeated. "The grief in the city," says Ammirato,* "was much greater than can be described by words!"

A few days before, when almost all the city had followed to the grave the body of old Rinaldo Gianfigliazzi, who at ninety years of age was one of the "Ten of War," and who for more than half a century had been one of the leading men in Florence, his fellow-citizens had regretted, as they laid him in his tomb in the monastery of Santa Trinita, "in the monastic habit of one of the brethren," that the venerable old man should not have lived to see the result of his patriotic toil in the successful issue of the war. Now they envied one whose prolonged term of years had run out before that day had dawned on Florence.

But there was yet more bad news to come. Misfortune

* Lib. xix. Conf. 806.

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had not yet emptied all her budget on the devoted heads of the Florentines. The next tidings were that Piccinino, in some sudden displeasure, had left the Florentine service and gone over to that of the Duke! Some attributed this defection to the great captain's disgust at the haggling of the Government, which had hesitated to renew his engagement on the terms he proposed. It may not perhaps be necessary to look any further for the motives of a desertion, which does not seem to have drawn down any of that general obloquy on the head of the man who was guilty of it, with which similar conduct would assuredly be visited in our day, than the simple desire of being quit of his connection with a losing cause. A.D. 1426.

In Florence itself, of course, indignation against Piccinino ran high; and it showed itself in that manner, so characteristic of the people and the time, which we have seen adopted at a much earlier day to mark the anger of the Commonwealth against its enemies. A portrait of the faithless general, together with those of five others who had similarly incurred the anger of the citizens, the Conte Alberigo, of Zagonora, the Conte Cristofano d'Avello, the Conte Azzo, of Romena, the Conte Guelfo of Dovadola, and the Conte Antonfrancesco, of Pontedera, was painted on the wall of the palace of the "Ten of War," with the head downwards, and hanging by one foot. And the name of each of the individuals thus executed in effigy was inscribed in large letters under his portraiture.

Once again in the autumn of that year, 1426, embassies were despatched to the Pope and to the Venetians, in the hope that one or both of those powers might be led to see that it was not for their interest to allow Florence to be wholly beaten down by the overgrown power of the Visconti. Rinaldo degli Albizzi a second time undertook the embassy to Rome; and received minute directions respecting the topics he was to enlarge on, and the argu-



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A.D. 1426. ments he was to urge in public Consistory before the Pope. He was instructed to assure the Holy Father, after having pointed out to him all the considerations which should have induced him for his own sake to oppose the progress of the Milanese arms, that the Florentines for their part "were determined to sacrifice in defence of liberty not only their goods, their lives, and the lives of their children, but their own souls!"—a phrase which, it is worth remarking, might, if addressed to any one else, be mere verbiage, but which, addressed to a Pope, may have been intended to convey a significant hint. And it was a hint, which the conduct of the Florentines on every occasion in their past history, when priestly claims to their spiritual allegiance came into competition with the civil and secular interests of the community, would have fully warranted the Pontiff in taking to heart. But as the Holy Father had no intention of being convinced by anything the Florentines could say to him, and as he thought that their remonstrances might be disagreeable to hear, he cut the matter short by refusing to allow the ambassadors to appear before a Consistory at all. In short, Papa Martino would do nothing; and was bent on showing the Florentines that he would never be worth a farthing to *them* at all events.

At Venice, Lorenzo Ridolfi, to whom that embassy had been confided, met with better success. At first the Venetian Senate seemed little inclined to accede to the wishes of the sister republic, urging that they had no just and legitimate grounds for breaking the treaty of peace, which had some years yet to run, between Venice and the Duke of Milan. It is more probable, however, that the shrewd directors of the Venetian policy hoped, by showing an absence of any readiness to meet the Florentine overtures, merely to drive a harder bargain in the matter of the conditions of the compact. At all events, an offensive and defensive league between the two republics was definitively

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signed on the 4th of December, 1426.* The terms eventually agreed on were, however, fair and equal enough, with one important exception, to the effect that Venice should retain the right of making peace or truce with the enemy at her pleasure, while it should not be permissible for Florence to do so without the consent of her ally.† A.D. 1426.

It is so clear that sound policy made it absolutely imperative on the Venetians to join their power to that of the Florentines upon this occasion, that it seems surprising that they should have refused to do so at an earlier period of the war. There can be little doubt, that had it not been for the timely, though late aid of Venice, Florence would not have been able much longer to withstand the Visconti power, and that the Duke of Milan would have extended, and might have succeeded in establishing his dominion over the whole of the peninsula as far as the frontier of Naples. The heroic and determined resistance of Florence would not have been overcome without the complete annihilation of the Florentine power and resources. Among all their faults and follies the Florentine traders cannot be charged with having ever, as long as the Republic lasted, preferred their money-bags to the independence of their country. Their conduct and feelings in this matter may be very favourably and remarkably contrasted with those of some other money aristocracies in different parts and at different epochs of the world. Florence, it may be safely asserted, would not have yielded as long as she had the means of sending a man into the field.

But this heroism of the great commercial Commonwealth, it must be remembered, consisted in a readiness to spend in the cause of Italian freedom not its last drop of blood, but its last shilling. The power of Florence was

* According to Florentine reckoning, by which the year began with March.

† Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 808.



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A.D. 1426. essentially and solely a money power. The arms of the Florentine factory operatives were strong in a street riot; and the magnates of the trading aristocracy could, as they were ever but too ready to prove, meet death for the sake of an opinion, with as unblenching a front as ever did belted knight amid the sustaining fury of the battle-field. But it would have availed little towards arresting the march of the invading Lombard armies, if those stout-hearted old merchants and bankers had, like the Conscript Fathers of old, sate each behind his counter, awaiting the death-stroke, with his ledger, his sole weapon, in his hand! Mighty weapon as that same ledger had been, while the balances indicated in its pages were such as commanded the credit of Europe, it was a most melancholy *brutum fulmen* when the balances were on the wrong side. What could the little city on the Arno, with its hundred thousand or so of inhabitants, do by the mere brute force and sinews of all the men, women, and children in it? The extraordinary power which made Florence in those ages one of the most important members of the European family of nations, was essentially a money power. When she went to war, her manner was to hire half a score of princes with their subjects, to do her bidding, to subsidize an Emperor, or bribe a Pope to bid "the stars in their courses" fight on her side. And there never was any lack of noble iron-clad knights ready and proud to fight beneath the crimson *giglio*, as long as the store of golden florins lasted;—just so long, and no longer! Noble iron-clad knights ignored, as was natural, any such mercantile notion as credit; and had the very strongest prejudices in favour of ready cash. Florence was a formidable power as long as her cash lasted; as soon as her coffers were empty, she was but a small community of tradesmen, at the mercy of even a little commander of a few thousand "lances."

And there had been ominous signs recently, that the

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strain upon the money-power of Florence, vast as that was, had been almost too severe. Several bankruptcies had taken place, caused at all events in a great measure by the failing credit of the Government. There was something that almost amounted to a panic in Florence. Not that the bottom of the Florentine purse was absolutely reached, or nearly reached; but nevertheless the premonitory signs were ominous and disquieting, and such as to justify the opinion that the Commonwealth would not have been able to continue much longer to stem the whole power of the Lombard Ghibellinism by her own unaided strength. A.D. 1426.

In that crisis Venice came to the rescue, either then for the first time convinced that the danger was one which threatened her also; or, considering that the moment had at last come when the burthen of fighting the battle of freedom could no longer safely be thrown upon other shoulders. Venice came to the rescue, and the tide and fortunes of the war were reversed.

Those who are fond of speculating on what the course of human affairs might have been, if the events which appear to have been influential in directing them had fallen out otherwise than as they did, may perhaps doubt whether it was for the advantage of Italy that these repeated attempts to bring the whole of the peninsula under one sceptre should have been frustrated by a spirit, which all the world was then agreed in considering as patriotism, though the world of our own day has learned to call it unpatriotic narrowness and selfishness. Italy reduced at that time to one united kingdom, would at the worst have been in no less favourable a condition in respect of civil government, than the other monarchies of Europe. She would, there is every reason to suppose, have advanced in the career of civilization and progress towards free government at least *pari passu* with them, instead of having now to enter on the race, not only sadly belated, but weighted

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A.D. 1426. with all the ineptitudes and incapacities which have resulted from all she has undergone in the interval. None the less for any considerations of this kind, however, is the praise due to Florence, of having struck and perilled all for the unquenchable love of freedom and civilizing progress, that was part and parcel of the hearts and minds of her sons. At the time when Florence stood forth alone to make herself the bulwark of central Italy against the power of Filippo Maria Visconti, there can be no doubt that her cause was the cause of civilization and human improvement.

The first result of the step Venice had at length taken, was seen in a sudden defection of friends from the Visconti, and flocking of new adherents to the cause, which now very evidently began to be considered in Italy as the stronger one. Foremost among this noble army of rats was the Marchese Niccolo of Ferrara. The Lord of Mantua hastened to be second. And various other of the Lombard princes followed their lead. The Marchese Niccolo was entrusted with the command in chief of the Florentine forces, with the understanding that Parma and Lugo, if in the course of the war they should be wrested from the Duke of Milan, should remain his own.

The tide of fortune at once began to roll in the contrary direction to that which it had hitherto so obstinately followed.

The first remarkable result of this change of fortune was the taking of Brescia. There was in that city a strong Guelph party, to which the domination of the Duke of Milan was of course extremely distasteful. And Francesco Carmignuola, the general in chief of the forces of the new league, and one of the most celebrated captains of the day, —the only one indeed in the service of the two Republics, to be at all compared with Sforza and Piccinino, both now in the pay of Visconti,—availing himself of this circumstance, contrived to open communications with this

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disaffected party, and by their aid to introduce, one night in the early part of March, 1426, a body of Venetian troops into the city. Brescia, which both by nature and by art, had been made one of the strongest positions at that time existing in upper Italy, would seem to have been not only politically but even locally divided between the Ghibelline majority and the Guelph minority of its inhabitants. And the troops of the league, together with their Guelph friends within the walls, easily made themselves masters of that quarter of the city which was exclusively inhabited by them.* Nevertheless this was very far from making them masters of Brescia. The citadel, which was very strong, and all the most defensible parts of the town, still held out for the Visconti. And the importance of the position very soon made the struggle for the possession of these the main scene and feature of the war. A.D. 1426.

The Duke was compelled by the urgency of the necessity for saving Brescia to withdraw his forces from Romagna; and this was in itself a great gain to the Florentines, who were thus liberated from the presence of war in their own immediate neighbourhood. Dividing, therefore, the forces thus made available into two bodies, they sent one of them to assist in the siege of Brescia, and kept the other in the nighbourhood of Arezzo for the recovery of the fortresses and territory which had fallen into the hands of the enemy during the late disastrous campaign.

In spite of the utmost efforts of the Duke, and partly, it is insinuated by the chroniclers, in consequence of jealousies and disputes respecting precedency and authority between his own generals, Brescia fell completely into the power of the forces of the league on the 20th of November, 1426. The long struggle which resulted in this most important success,—a struggle in which all the difficulties of a siege

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 810.

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A.D. 1426. were combined with those of a hand to hand fight for every foot of ground,—was considered as one of the most remarkable military feats of that day, and held to have placed the reputation of Carmignuola beyond all rivalry.

One of the first results of this success was the manifestation of a desire on the part of Amadeus, the first Duke of Savoy, to join the victorious league. He too had grounds of complaint against the Visconti; and now that fortune was declaring against him, it seemed a good opportunity for the Duke of Savoy to do the same.

Some smaller matters in Romagna, and in the mountains, having meanwhile gone also unfavourably for the Duke of Milan, his friend, Pope Martin, sent envoys to Florence to sound the Signory as to their willingness to make peace.

There could be little doubt of the willingness of the Florentines to make peace, if it could be shown them that the paramount objects which had driven them to make war had been obtained, and the dangers which had seemed to them worse than the certain misfortunes of warfare effectually guarded against. The war had already cost the Commonwealth two millions and a half of golden florins, which it could ill afford, and which it had raised with difficulty by means which were producing very serious internal disturbances, as will be seen when we come to speak of the system of taxation which grew out of these difficulties, in the chapter which has been promised on this special subject. There could be little doubt of the desire of Florence for peace;—but, in the first place, it must be shown that the objects of the war had been attained; and, in the next place, peace must be made at Venice and not at Florence, according to the terms of the Venetian alliance. The Pope's envoy was therefore most cordially received, and Lionardo Bruni of Arezzo, the historian, was sent to Rome in return, to assure his Holiness how grateful the

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Commonwealth would feel if he could succeed in bringing about so desirable a consummation.* The Cardinal of Santa Croce was accordingly sent to Venice; and there, after much difficulty, arising from the unwillingness of Visconti to submit to the hard terms which his military reverses enforced on him, articles of peace were at last signed on the 30th of December, 1427; Rinaldo degli Albizzi and Marcello Strozzi acting as commissioners on behalf of the Commonwealth. A.D. 1427.

The main stipulations were, that the Duke should give up to Venice the city and territory of Brescia; that whatever castles, towns, or territories had belonged to Savoy before the usurpations of the Duke of Milan's father should be restored to the Duke Amadeus; that no weirs, stakes, or other works for holding back the waters of the Po should be executed by the Milanese; that the Duke of Milan, as sovereign of Genoa, should liberate the Florentines from all obligation to load their merchandize for and from England and Flanders in Genoese ships, according to the terms of existing treaties between Florence and Genoa, and should further hold the Florentine merchants quit of any penalties they might have incurred for previous breaches of this pact; that every place or thing which had been taken from Florence in the course of this war should be restored; and that the sovereign of Milan should not in any way interfere in the affairs of Romagna, of Tuscany, of Bologna, or of any part of Italy lying between Bologna and Rome. This was the main point on which Florence was anxious, for the sake of which she had gone to war, and without having obtained which she would never have made peace. At the same time there were, as usual, a great number of stipulations for the restoration of the castles and territories that had been taken during the

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 810.

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A.D. 1427. war from the numerous independent allies of the Commonwealth.*

It will be at once seen that these were crushingly humiliating terms for the ambitious Duke of Milan. The loss of Brescia cut out from the very heart of his dominions one of the most valuable and important provinces belonging to them. The undertakings with regard to his future conduct dictated by the Florentines closed the path for ever to all those ambitious designs which were the dear and constant objects of his life. The terms were signed by the Milanese plenipotentiaries in the monastery of St. George the Greater at Venice, as has been said; but it may be very safely asserted that Gian Maria Visconti never for an instant had the smallest intention of observing them. Wealthy Milan herself, burning with anger at the humiliation which had been put upon her, made spontaneous offers of means to enable her Duke to renew the war—coupling the tender of her purse with certain conditions regarding municipal liberties, which, as soon as the needed aid had been rendered, the Duke laughed at;† and when the time stipulated for the giving up of the castles belonging to the allies, which were in his hands, arrived, Visconti refused to abide by the terms of the treaty of Venice; and Italy was once again at war!

This second war, lasting during the whole of the year 1427, cost the Florentines another million of florins, the debt having at the end of it grown to a sum of three millions and a half. But the results of it were as favourable to the Commonwealth, and even more disastrous to the Duke, than those of the first contest.

In the course of the summer, either at the end of June or the beginning of July—for strangely enough the chroni-

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Gonf. 813.

† Litta. Fam. Ital. Celeb. Visconti family, article Gian. Maria.

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clers are not agreed upon this point—a great battle was fought by the two armies in the immediate neighbourhood of Cremona. It was the greatest battle that had for several centuries ever been seen on Italian ground, not less than seventy thousand men having been engaged, nearly equally divided between the two parties. All Italy, too, awaited the upshot of that day with the more intense interest, because all the greatest captains of the time were opposed to each other on the field. The Duke of Milan himself, also, was on the ground, having come from Cremona expressly for the purpose rather of witnessing the battle, as it would seem, than of taking the absolute direction of it. A.D. 1427.

But the result was very insignificant after all. Carmignuola was in the course of the day thrown from his horse, and a violent struggle ensued over his prostrate iron-cased body, in which, if the Milanese had prevailed, the eventual fortune of the day might probably have been different. But his own friends succeeded in placing their General on his horse again. The action was fought amid clouds of dust so thick and general that it was with the greatest difficulty, and by voice and speech rather than by eyesight, that the troops and captains on either side recognised each other. Carmignuola himself was heard afterwards to declare that he should have been made prisoner again and again in the course of the day if it had been possible for the enemy to see him. The two hosts separated at night-fall, having committed, according to modern estimates of such matters, a very moderate amount of slaughter, and having taken each a nearly equal number of prisoners. On the whole, the advantages obtained were confessedly nearly balanced, and victory was claimed by neither side.

But on the 11th of October another battle was fought on those same blood-fattened plains, which have been for

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A.D. 1428. ages the great fighting ground of all the races which have disputed the possession of Italy, with a more decisive result. On this occasion Carmignuola and the allied forces thoroughly routed the Ducal army, and might, it was thought at the time, have done much more, and placed Milan itself in great danger, and in all probability taken Cremona, if, throwing a bridge across the Adda, the victorious General had pushed his success to the uttermost. But whether it were, says Ammirato, that Carmignuola considered the winter to be too close upon him, or whether, with the fault common to the hired armies of those times, he did not wish the entire ruin of the Duke, the fact was, that he did not reap all the advantages from his victory which he might have gained.*

Enough however had been done in the course of the summer and autumn, to make Gian Maria once again unwillingly willing to make peace. Again the Cardinal of Santa Croce was entrusted with the duties of peace-maker, and the commissioners of the different parties met this time at Ferrara. Those on behalf of the Florentines were Palla degli Strozzi and Averardo de' Medici. After long negotiation terms were at length agreed to, and signed on the 18th of April, 1428.† The conditions were nearly the same as in the former peace, except that the Duke had now to give up to the Venetians, not only Brescia, but also Bergamo and its territory as far as the Adda, and a great part of the territory of Cremona. Nevertheless, the snake was scotched only, and not killed, as we shall hereafter see,—to the great future trouble and misfortune of Florence, and of all Italy.

The Florentine historians grumble with regard to the conditions of this peace, that the Venetians got all the profit from the war; but the complaint is hardly a reason-

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 818. † *Ibid.* Conf. 820.

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able one. The Venetians got what it was bargained in the conditions of the alliance that they should get, — all that should be wrested from the Duke in Lombardy. And as the Tuscans enjoyed the incalculable advantage of having the fight fought out on other soil than their own, the prizes of the fight were naturally situated in the country which had endured the evils of it. It should also have been remembered by the Florentines, that by the conditions of the peace they obtained all that, for the sake of which they went most unwillingly into the war ;—the erection of a barrier, which should shut out the overgrown power of a Lombard prince from all progress southwards, and all interference in the concerns of central Italy. This, and this alone was really, as well as professedly, the sole, legitimate, and patriotic object of Florence in the war ; and grumblings afterwards because Florence did not reap immediate and material advantages from it, do wrong to the truly single-hearted rectitude of the motives which induced the Commonwealth to incur an expenditure of three millions and a half of florins, the necessity of raising which led to most important internal changes, the nature of which it will be the business of the next chapter to explain. A.D. 1428.

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## CHAPTER VI.

Taxation very light in the early times of Florence—"Gabelle"—Surplus of revenue—First public debt—Forced loans—"Gonfaloni" of the Companies—"Balia" for distributing loans—Mode of apportionment between individual citizens—"Specchio"—Unjust partiality in the distribution of the loans—Discontent—Testimony of Varchi—Ground on which the rich based their exemption from taxation—Cost of Florentine wars—A loan impartially distributed—Outcry of rich citizens at this novelty—Disturbances in the city—Meeting of wealthy men in the church of Santo Stefano—Rinaldo degli Albizzi—Niccolo da Uzzano—His allusions to Giovanni de' Medici—Overtures to him from the aristocratic party—Reply of Giovanni de' Medici—"Novita"—Force of the term in Florence—"Catasta"—Mode of forming the "catasta"—A "Decima"—Rules for the mode of levying—Penalties—Arbitrary and irresponsible power of the Commissioners for the "catasta"—Results of the action of Giovanni de' Medici in this matter—Public expenses continually on the increase—Tax-gatherer not a visitor at definite intervals at Florence—Financial exhaustion—Current interest of money—The only regular revenue of the State drawn from Customs—Arbitrariness of Florentine taxation—Reform of the "catasta" law in the year 1425—Misconceptions and confusions of idea indicated by the financial laws of the Commonwealth.

In the early times of the Commonwealth the revenues of Florence had been small, but its needs had been yet smaller. Personal pomp and luxury had never been in vogue in the thrifty republican city;—had not even yet become so, at the period this narrative has reached. The simple-mannered magistrates, who after their brief period of office returned to the ordinary mode of life of their fellow-tradesmen, served their country either gratuitously, or mainly recompensed by the supply of their plain personal needs during the months of their term of service. The

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wars of the old Commonwealth, however costly they may have been in the destruction of wealth, and the sources of wealth, made small demands on the public treasury in the days when the angry citizens rushed forth to do battle with foes, whom each man felt to be his personal enemies. And the "Comunità" in those days of small things, acquired its earliest reputation of wealth, as befitted a mercantile community, by always having a surplus in its chest.

Up to 1336, the income of the Commune of Florence never reached a higher sum than 300,000 florins. That sum was raised entirely by duties, "*Gabelle*," some of the nature of customs, some of the nature of excise, and some levied as "duties" on contracts. Moderate in their amount, and levied, as from the earliest times was the case in Florence, according to a scale, which pressed very lightly on articles of primary necessity, and gradually increased in weight as it reached those of comfort, and lastly those of mere luxury, the above-named sum was raised with very little inconvenience to the people. That such was the case may be considered proved by the fact that it was raised at all. For the yearly expenses of the Government did not at the same time amount to more than 40,000 florins; so that a very abundant surplus remained for any of those extraordinary expenses; such as the supply of corn during a time of famine, or the construction of some public building on a scale of splendour unmatched by the greatest nations of Europe,—which from time to time the Commune thought fit to undertake.*

In the year 1336, the expenses of the war undertaken in conjunction with Venice against Mastino della Scala, for objects altogether analogous to those which motived the wars against the Visconti, necessitated for the first time

* Pagnini della Decima, tom. i. p. 10, and following.

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the creation of a public debt. The funds needed were raised by borrowing from the citizens themselves at interest. But the operation must in no wise be imagined to resemble those by which the public debts of modern times are created. The money thus borrowed from the citizens by the Government was called "*Prestanza*," a word formed from the old term *Præstagium*, which, according to Ducange, signified a *forced* loan. The Florentine *prestanze* were forced loans; and it became a most important question how the distribution of them among the citizens was to be regulated; and from the difficulties attending this arose a great part of the discontents and jealousies, which more than once involved the Commonwealth in civil war and revolution.

The mode originally adopted, though it seems to have been ingeniously contrived with a view to fairness in the distribution of the public burthens, lent itself easily to abuses, as may be readily understood from a brief statement of it. The city was divided after the expulsion of the Duke of Athens, as will be remembered, into four quarters, and each quarter into four wards or "Gonfaloni,"—banners with certain devices in the nature of arms painted on them, which gave their names to the different wards;*—names which were preserved in the book of the public debt long after the original object of those "Gonfaloni," as standards under which the citizens were to march out for military purposes, had been lost sight of. When a need for money arose, a "*Balia*," or board of citizens, was appointed by the Government to superintend the raising of the sum required. This board assigned to each of the sixteen wards of the city a portion of the whole amount supposed to be fairly apportioned to

* A curious illustration of this mode of municipal organization may yet be seen extant in the very interesting mediæval festival still celebrated at Siena every August.

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the means of the inhabitants of that ward. But besides that it is evident that such a distribution must even at the best have been based upon guess-work so rough as to have small chance of attaining justice, and no chance at all of excluding discontent, it was hardly to be hoped, that any board charged with such an office would be altogether unbiassed by partiality. It was utterly beyond all hope that it should not be suspected of such partiality.

The second step was to distribute to each of the individual householders enrolled in the lists of each ward, his share of the sum which his ward was called upon to furnish. For this purpose, seven boards of seven members each were appointed in each ward, who proceeded, each board separately, to make out seven schemes of distribution, according to their own notion of the ability of each of their neighbours. These seven different schemes were sent in sealed, to the Signory, who transmitted them to the friars of some one of the best reputed monasteries of the city, to be by them examined and treated in the following manner. They threw aside the four schemes in which the greatest extremes of inequality were observable, and added up the three sums awarded to each taxpayer by the three other schemes, and then finally awarded to each the third part of the sum thus arrived at.

The amount thus awarded was to be paid into the exchequer by a certain day under a variety of penalties, the principal of which consisted in being incapacitated from holding any office, and from pleading or suing in any court of law. The names of those who did not pay to the day were registered in a book called the "*Specchio*"—or mirror—because in it the position of the affairs of every citizen might be seen as in a looking-glass; and hence came the phrase so constantly met with in the pages of all the



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Florentine historians, "*netto di Specchio,*" to signify one whom no entry in that disqualifying register rendered ineligible to any of the numerous appointments and honours for aspiring to which "*nettezza di specchio*" was a primary and irremissible necessity.

If, as has been said, it was scarcely possible that such a system as this should, with the very best intentions, have worked fairly, if it was hardly to be hoped that such intentions should always have existed, and if it was wholly out of the question that, whether they existed or not, evil intentions should not be attributed to those on whom the duty of thus distributing the public burthens fell, it was also tolerably certain that any unfairness that existed would be to the advantage of the rich and powerful, and to the undue oppression of the poorer citizens; and quite certain that the latter would, in any case, believe themselves to be unfairly taxed for the benefit of their richer neighbours, into whose hands the management of the matter fell. And we find, accordingly, that this mode of distributing the public burthens was the great standing ground of complaint of the lower classes against those who had the government in their hands, and that demands were again and again made, that the distribution of the "*prestanze,*" —the forced loans, which supplied the place of taxes,— should be made according to an estimate of the property of every citizen. One of the leading demands of the people at the time of the Ciompi rising was, that such an estimate should be made within the next six months. The historian Varchi, writing about a hundred years after the time our story has reached, says that, previous to 1427, the burthens of the state were placed, not on the fortunes, but on the persons of the citizens; and asserts that the consequence was, that the rich paid scarcely anything, and the poor almost the whole sum required by the State; evidently considering that such a result must have neces-

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sarily and naturally followed from such a mode of arranging the portions due from each of them.*

Of course also the evil became greater and more intolerable, as the difference of fortune between the richest and the poorest classes of the taxpaying citizens increased. When enormous masses of wealth had been accumulated in the hands of individuals, it was pretty nearly certain, that the amounts of the public burthens, awarded to them under the system which has been described, would be altogether insignificant in proportion to that which their riches, duly calculated, would have warranted. In fact, so much had it become a matter of course, that the oligarchs, in whose hands the power of the Government was placed at the time of which we are speaking, should escape their due share of the "*prestanze*," that in the disputes which the necessity for raising the large sums needed for the war with the Duke of Milan brought to a climax in 1427, the fact was avowed and justified by the aristocratic party on the ground that those who neglected their private affairs for the sake of attending to the management of those of the Commonwealth, ought not to be expected to contribute to the expenses of it, as those ought who were able to employ their whole time in looking after their own private interests in their shops and farms.†

The argument was answered by the complaining party with no little irony, by the observation that there were plenty of citizens to be found, who would be ready to undertake the management of the affairs of the State without asking for any such compensation, and that moreover it was by no means observed to be the case, that the private affairs of those who had thus employed themselves had in any degree suffered from that circumstance. In fact, the extraordinary obstinacy with which every attempt

* Varchi, Storia Fiorentina, vol. iii. p. 34. Edit. Firenze, 1844.
† Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 816.



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at changing the old system for a more equitable one had been opposed always by the upper and wealthier classes, can be attributed, and was attributed, to no other motive than a desire to continue that unjust immunity from the public burthens which they had so long enjoyed.

Matters were rapidly coming to a pass, however, in Florence at which it was impossible that things should go on upon the footing which has been described. An amount of injustice which was tolerable, or was at all events tolerated, though not without periodical outbursts of discontent, when the needs of the Commonwealth were comparatively small, and easily borne, and when the subject had been less examined, and was far less understood, could not last in the condition of things that had been arrived at towards the close of the second war with Giovanni-Maria Visconti, in 1427. The proportions of the evil were becoming greater with terrible and very alarming rapidity. The great war with Mastino della Scala had cost the Commonwealth something over six hundred thousand golden florins. A six months' war with Giangaleazzo Visconti had cost three millions and a half. From the year 1377 to the year 1406, the Commonwealth had spent in war no less a sum than eleven millions and a half! The war with the Duke of Milan, which was terminated by the peace of 1418, had cost upwards of three millions and a half![*] And now the bills were coming in for the prosecution of a yet more costly struggle.

And all these vast sums,—monstrous, indeed, as they appear when the difference in the value of coin at that period is taken into consideration,—had been raised in that small community by that rough and unsatisfactory process, the unjust operation of which had long since become notorious to all the citizens. It is truly a matter

[*] Pagnini della Decima, vol. i. p. 33.

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of wonder, to be explained only by the reflection that the iniquity complained of galled, not those classes whose brawny arms were ever ready for a street fight in any cause which touched their sympathies and prejudices, but those classes of quiet money-making traders, to whom disturbance and revolution were yet more distasteful than the injustice of the tax-gatherer,—it is truly a matter of surprise, I say, that the system should have lasted as long as it did.

Nevertheless, not only was the powerful and wealthy oligarchy as determined as ever to resist any change with a view to the introduction of a fairer system, but their rage and indignation at an attempt to levy the contributions under the old system a little more fairly than had been the usual practice, became the more immediate causes of the much-needed reformation.

In the summer months of 1426, just in the severest period of the war, the men in whose hands the heavy burthen of the executive power was placed for the time being, driven by the pressing necessity of finding funds for the prosecution of the contest, and goaded by the clamours of the people, and especially of the peace party, which had from the beginning disapproved of the war, caused a forced loan to be levied, with a degree of impartiality to which the rich oligarchs of the city had never been accustomed. The outcry was prodigious. Many of the more powerful of the aristocratic traders absolutely and defiantly refused to pay the sums apportioned to them; and opposed overt resistance to the attempts of the government officers to levy them. That such conduct should have been possible, furnishes a singular proof not so much of the powerlessness of law over the actions of the citizens, who were the makers of and consenting parties to it, as of its powerlessness over their minds. It seems wonderful to the citizen of more law-abiding times, and perhaps it is unhappily necessary to

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say also of a more law-revering race, that those members of a commercial community,—not lawless, high-handed, feudal nobles living isolated in strong castles, but trading denizens of a city of which all the prosperity, wealth, and standing necessarily depended on the supremacy of law,—should have thought it in any way compatible with the nature of things that society should hold together, and be carried on, under such circumstances. Very curious also in this point of view is the tone in which the old Florentine historians recount these events. No word of blame or surprise is to be found either in the pages of the profound politician Machiavelli, or in those of the impartial and unimpassioned professional man of letters, Ammirato, at the conduct they have to relate. They seem to consider that the scandalous and deplorable scenes to which the collection of the impost gave rise, were the natural result surely to have been anticipated from the imprudent attempt to subject great and leading citizens to the same unceremonious treatment that would have been with propriety resorted to in the case of their humbler fellow-citizens.

"It seemed likely," writes Machiavelli, "that there would be bloodshed between the parties; and every prudent man feared that mischief was at hand, it being impossible for great men, accustomed to be treated with respect, to endure to have hands laid on them (*essere manomessi*), and the other party at the same time being determined that every one should be burthened equally."*

"Orders having been given," writes Ammirato, "that the impost should be levied without regard to persons, and that those who would not obey, and who, more proud than the others, defended themselves with arms, should by force of arms be compelled to pay, sundry sad accidents shortly happened; inasmuch as the severe orders given were, as is

* Machiavelli, Istorie Fiorentine, ed. cit. vol. i p. 259, lib. iv.

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generally the case, yet more severely executed, so that hands were laid on many citizens, with such great disturbance and so much to the scandal of the neighbourhoods where these things happened, that it seemed as if the city, which had so much difficulty in providing for the war abroad, would have a yet fiercer and more terrible war within its own walls; and all the city was in agitation, because it displeased the great that no difference should be made between persons of different quality; and the others kept crying out all day long that the same measure should be meted out to all."*

It requires little consideration on the part of a nineteenth-century Englishman to see how far a people, whose best men could thus feel and thus write on such facts, must have been from the possibility of attaining any durable or tolerable system of self-government.

Burning with indignation at the state of things which has been described, seventy of the rich men, who had been thus scandalously insulted by an attempt to tax them equally with their poorer fellow-citizens, held a meeting in the church of Santo Stefano, with the connivance of Lorenzo Ridolfi and Francesco Gianfigliazzi, two of their own party, who were in the Signory during those two summer months of 1426.

Rinaldo degli Albizzi, the young and haughty leader of the aristocratic party, opened the meeting with a speech, which the historians profess to record; but of which it is evident that they are giving in reality only the substance. In this Machiavelli and Ammirato closely agree, and there is no reason to doubt that they have accurately preserved the gist of his discourse. It turned entirely, as might be supposed, upon the absolute necessity of repressing and keeping down the people—"*la plebe.*" He pointed out to

* Ammirato, lib. xix. Gonf. 810.

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his sympathizing audience how every portion of the past history of the city bore witness to the advantages which had resulted from accomplishing this, and the evils which had flowed from the neglect of it. The most recent measure which had been adopted by their fathers for this purpose was the abolition of the two popular guilds which had been added by the Ciompi to the fourteen of the minor trades. That measure had done much, but it had not done enough. The success, however, which had attended it had been sufficiently marked to indicate to them the path which they ought to follow. More of the same remedy was what was needed. Let the fourteen guilds of the minor trades be reduced to seven. That reform once accomplished, they would have no further difficulty in dealing with a populace whose influence in the city would be thus reduced just one half. And as for the danger that might be feared from attempting any such *coup d'état,* he saw, he said, more than one member of the Ten of War* among them. Let them take care to introduce into the city discreetly and dexterously a sufficient number of troops, and nothing further was requisite to enable them to make any change in the constitution which might seem good to them!

It will be admitted, that this young citizen of a republic, whose aristocracy was the product of his ledger, had as promising ideas on the principles of legitimate well-ordered government as any mail-clad owner of right-divine-ruled vassals, whose greatness had been achieved by the sword instead of the pen.

But there were older heads than that of Rinaldo degli Albizzi in that assembly, which, if not wiser, had at least learned more caution. Old Niccolò da Uzzano, who had for many years been looked up to as one of the main

* On whom all the troops in the pay of the Commonwealth exclusively depended.

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supports of the aristocratic party, rose as soon as Rinaldo had done speaking, and told the assembly that though he agreed with every word his young friend had said, as far as the desirability of the step he counselled went, he had grave doubts as to its practicability. He reminded those present that several years since he had already warned many of them of the necessity of putting down "certain persons, who, under pretext of piety, made a practice of assisting poor citizens, relieving the unfortunate, paying other people's debts, of using, in short, the populace as a means of turning to account their vast wealth;—men, who by employing their immense resources in these and other ways and exercises, succeeded in making themselves masters of the populace."

All this was said in allusion to Giovanni de' Medici; and though with genuine Italian caution old Niccolò da Uzzano named no name in connection with these insinuations, there was no man present who did not perfectly well know the object of them. The accusations thus made, and the sort of character thus attempted to be fastened on the chief founder of all the after Medicean greatness, were doubtless not then heard in Florence for the first time; though it is the first time we meet in the pages of the historians with a charge, which was unceasingly repeated by the opponents of the Medici in the times which were then near at hand. If Giovanni de' Medici commenced the greatness of his family by investing his wealth in the purchase of popularity, assuredly his son and his grandson carried on the venture on an increasingly extensive scale. Giovanni de' Medici, it will be remembered, had been accused before this,—and the accusation may yet be seen in the pages of old Gino Capponi, his contemporary,—not merely of designingly expending his wealth in such a manner as to captivate the good will of the masses, but of using it for the purpose of directly fomenting disaffection and sedition.

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And Niccolò da Uzzano had done his utmost, in vain, to prevent him from being made Gonfaloniere a few months previously. Doubtless it was to the fruitless counsels he had given on that occasion, that the old tory chieftain was now alluding in his speech to the meeting in the church of Santo Stefano. But the experienced old party politician went on to tell his hearers, that it was too late now to attempt to act in the high-handed manner that might have succeeded at the date of his former warnings. The mischief, which he then dreaded and foresaw, had already been done,—at least it had been done to too great a degree to admit of such a plan of action as that recommended by Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi being attempted, without running a far greater risk than it would be prudent to face. He saw but one course to take; that of endeavouring to gain the man, who was already too powerful to be defied. If that could be done, then indeed the steps proposed might be taken, and the desired reform carried out with a very tolerable prospect of success and safety.

The delicate task of attempting this negotiation with Messer Giovanni, was entrusted by the meeting of aristocrats to young Rinaldo degli Albizzi. It may seem that old Niccolò da Uzzano would have been a fitter person to undertake so delicate a mission to his fellow grey-beard de' Medici. But, perhaps, that former opposition to his claims to the chief magistracy, had caused a degree of personal enmity between the two old men which made it difficult for them to meet.

Rinaldo degli Albizzi waited on the old banker, the now-acknowledged chief of the democratic party, and did his mission with the best eloquence he could command. He enlarged upon the difficulty of restraining the multitude, when once they have been imprudently allowed to get the bit between their teeth; the certainty that the possession of power, once permitted to escape from the

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hands of those at the apex of the social pyramid, would by an inevitable law never stop short in its downward course till it had reached the lowest stratum of society; that the contest would become one between those who possessed something and those who possessed nothing; that all property would be swept away by the irruption of lawless and greedy bands of the men who had all to gain and nothing to lose. In short, he used all the old arguments, which then dated only from the days of the old Roman agrarians, but which are still nearly as good as new, though some four centuries older.

The cautious old Medici listened calmly and patiently to all that his young visitor had to urge. Perhaps we should do the shrewd party chief no wrong, if we conjecture that he may have so contrived matters, that his own were not the only pair of ears that listened to the propositions of the young aristocrat. At all events, the answer of the banker was one which he would have wished the whole city to hear; and the whole city very soon, by some means or other, knew the tenour of it as well as if it had been cried aloud on the house-tops. Nothing, he said, had been more prejudicial to Florence than the continual changes which had been unceasingly made in the constitution; and in the present case there would be small wisdom in seeking an immediate and most formidable danger, for the purpose of providing against a conjectural, distant, and small one. The executive government, he observed, needed no powers beyond those which it possessed, for the due punishment of all disturbers of the peace, to whatever class they might belong; and it did seem to him an inopportune moment to seek a larger share of power for the upper classes, when it was notorious that never at any period of the history of the Commonwealth had they enjoyed so much, as was the case at the present time. What was really needed for the tranquillisation of the city, and the cessation of all dis-

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affection, was the honest and impartial levying of the present impost without respect for persons; and for the future, the discovery of some more equitable and satisfactory mode of adjusting the public burthens. Then, after a few significant words of warning to his young visitor, as to the dangers that might be found to attend the path he was entering on, pointed by a very significant reference to the recent fate of the Alberti, he added, coldly, that for his part he had no desire for any innovations.

This last phrase, protesting that the veteran chieftain of the democratic party had no desire for innovation—"*novità*"—was the most important of his discourse, and had in mediæval Italy a special and almost technical signification. To desire or to plot "*novità*" in the old Italian cities, was pretty accurately equivalent to being guilty of high treason. It was the special phrase always used to signify that crime of seeking to change the constitution of the State, either from that of a free city to that of a despotism, or *vice versâ*, which was so common a one in these communities, was so constantly and sharply watched for, and when unsuccessful so severely punished. To accuse an Italian citizen of those days of desiring "*novità*," was almost as bad as giving a dog that bad name which was sure to result in his destruction. And when the cautious old banker told the young aristocrat, who came to make these overtures of political alliance, that he for his part desired no innovations, it almost amounted to a charge of treasonable intentions against those who were opposed to him.

In fact, the sole result of the meeting in the church of Santo Stefano, and of the overtures made to Giovanni de' Medici, was to increase the disfavour in which the aristocratical party were held in the city, and very notably to augment the popularity, authority, and influence of

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Giovanni.* His unflinching declaration, that what was needed for the tranquillity of the city, and the peace and concord of the citizens, was a new and fairer means for the distribution of the public burthens, was not permitted to fall to the ground. It raised him to the very summit of the popular estimation; and so strong and irresistible a current of public feeling was agitated by the knowledge that he who so patriotically advocated this measure would be in consequence of his great wealth perhaps the largest sufferer from it in all the city, that it became impossible for the oligarchs to resist the reform any longer. And on the 22nd of May, 1427, by the authority and influence of de' Medici, that system of awarding the amount of the forced loans, to be supported by each citizen in accordance with an accurate estimate of the property of every man, which had for so many generations been the object of the popular desire, was at length finally established.

This was the celebrated "*Catasta,*" the regulations for the formation of which are the earliest attempt to contrive an equitable basis for an income and property tax. "*Catasta,*" properly, was the name of the register in which the goods of the citizens were recorded; and it was so called, simply because the names were heaped up, as it were, in a stack, in its pages, "*accatastate.*" The *Catasta* was intended to serve as a basis for the distribution of forced loans; and it has been said above, that it constitutes the earliest attempt at finding a fair basis for the imposition of an income tax. But there is, in fact, no difference between the two. The arangement, good for the one, was equally good for the other. The forced loan was to all intents and purposes a tax. Those burthened with it were as eager to escape from it as from any other form of tax. Pagnini, in his excellent, but unfortunately ex-

* Machiavelli, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 243; Ammirato, lib. xix. Conf. 811.

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tremely scarce work, "*Della Decima,*" which is, in fact, a most comprehensive treatise on the whole subject of the Florentine taxation and commerce, shows in detail, and very convincingly, how very ineffectual was the repayment with interest of the moneys received by the State, to remedy the evil of taking them from the pockets of the citizens. And as a proof to how great a degree this was recognised and was felt to be so by the citizens, he adduces the fact, that the greater number of those who could do so, were wont to avail themselves of a provision of the law, which permitted those whose contribution to any one loan was not more than two golden florins, to pay only the third part, and forfeit all claim to interest or repayment.

The rules which, under the impulsion of the popular party, and after so many years' resistance of the wealthy and powerful, were devised by the Florentines for this purpose, are sufficiently curious, and the subject is one which has still a sufficient interest of the kind which the French call *actualité*,—and which it is not likely very soon to lose,—to make it desirable to give the reader a compendious notion of them.

The whole duty of forming the *Catasta*,—*i.e.* of collecting the information, deciding on the truth of the statements made by the tax-payers, and deducing the net result, was entrusted to a board of ten, chosen by the Government out of sixty names drawn by lot from the purses containing the names of all citizens eligible to office.

The officers thus appointed were to construct a register, in which, under the name of every citizen, was to be entered the number of persons composing his family, the age, state of health, and capacity of each member, together with the industry, profession, art, or trade exercised by each.

The register also was to describe all the goods possessed

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by each citizen, whether moveable or immoveable, whether situated within or without the Florentine territory, "or in whatever part of the world they might be," comprising cash, debts, profit on traffic, merchandize, "male and female slaves," oxen, horses, or other animals.

Then a statement was to be made in the books, of the fruit or produce of every article of property, the crops from land with the valuation of them, rent-charges and rents of houses and other buildings, &c. And for every seven of the amount of such fruits, produce, or profit, one hundred was to be entered as the rateable value of the property.

From the rateable value thus arrived at, deduction was to be made of all rent-charges, liens, debts (duly certified), and obligations of all sorts assured on the property in question;—the rent of all houses inhabited by the persons described and their families, or of shops or other places used for the purposes of the trade or avocation carried on by them;—the price of any horses or mules used for their riding,—and lastly, a sum of two hundred florins for each mouth the described person was bound to maintain; due care being taken to note these sums severally, in order that if any such person so maintained should die or contract marriage, or cease in any other way to be chargeable to the taxpayer in question, the deduction on account of such person should cease to be made.

These deductions having been made, and the net taxable property of the tax-payer having been thus determined, that property is to be charged with ten soldi for every hundred florins, or in other words, with one-half per cent.; an amount known in the tax-literature of Florence as a *Decima, i.e.* the tenth of an income estimated at five per cent. on the presumed capital.

On the "mouths," or persons, in respect of whom deductions as above specified have been made, if they be

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not under eighteen, or over sixty years of age, an arbitrary sum of not more than one florin for each hundred deducted on their account, may be charged.

If the deductions to be made as provided should in any case amount to such a sum that nothing remain as taxable income, then a rate shall be imposed to be agreed upon between the commissioners and the taxpayer.

In order to "stimulate" the taxpayers to state honestly and fairly all their sources of income, it is provided, that any property which shall have been purposely kept back from the schedule, shall be confiscated.

In all cases of dispute or difference, the judgment of the commissioners shall be absolute and final; and their sentences shall be executed summarily, and without any formality of law. And the sum at which they have rated every taxpayer, shall be the sum payable by him until the triennial revision of the *Catasta*, notwithstanding any circumstances which may have arisen to lessen the amount. No diminution can be made in this, save by the authority of the Great Council. The amount, however, if any change of circumstances should require it, may be increased by the commissioners.

The first remark that occurs to the reader of the above ordinances is, that they were evidently framed with the intention of favouring as far as possible the poor man, at the expense of the rich. The object evidently is to tax all that a man possessed beyond what is necessary to his maintenance, and that of his family. The cost of all that is considered to be absolutely necessary for life, even including in this category a horse to ride on, is to be deducted before the tax-gatherer puts in his claim at all.

In the next place, one is struck by the tremendous rigour and arbitrariness of the law. All property not scheduled to be forfeited. No appeal from the summary jurisdiction of the commissioners. Their *ipse dixit* to be

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absolutely final. The subject of most modern monarchies, to say nothing of a constitution-loving Englishman, would scarcely endure the rigour of such a regimen. But the sovereign citizen of the free republic of mediæval Florence saw nothing oppressive in it.

Florence, on the contrary, deemed the new law an immense improvement and acquisition; and the foundations of the Medicean power were deeply and securely laid in the hearts of the people by the patriotic author of it, who being himself one of the richest men, if not absolutely the richest man in Florence, had yet, for the sake of justice and compassion on his poorer fellow-citizens, been willing that the expenses of the State should be thrown on the shoulders of the rich in almost as heavy a proportion as they had hitherto been borne by the comparatively poor. Whether the shrewd old banker may have considered that the extra sums to be paid by him into the coffers of the State were but a small item of the investments he was in the habit of making in the purchase of popularity and political influence, it would, perhaps, be hardly fair to human frailty to inquire.

It does not appear that the new law encountered any of that difficulty in the working of it which minds accustomed to the precision and certainty of modern legislative enactments might be led to expect from the difficulty, or rather indeed the impossibility of complying accurately with some of its provisions. The evil produced by it, on the contrary, arose from the too great facility with which it worked. The expenses of the Commonwealth were continually on the increase; and the sums raised under the new law were so prodigious that no amount of wealth or commercial prosperity could be otherwise than sapped and mined by such drafts upon the sources of them. For it will be observed that no notion at all can be formed from the terms of the enactment as given above, of the amount to which incomes were taxed in Florence. We are so used



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to consider our taxes, like our rents and other such matters, as an *annual* payment, that we are apt to take it for granted as a matter of course, that the one-half per cent. to be paid on the Florentine incomes was an annual charge. But such was very far indeed from being the case, and there was nothing in the forms and habits of Florentine political life to produce any idea in the minds of the people that it should be so. The whole question, therefore, of the amount to which income was to be taxed depended on the frequency with which the operation was repeated. The Florentine tax-payers would probably have thought themselves very well off if they could have compounded for not more than a dozen repetitions of the process in the course of twelve months. The archives of the Florentine income-tax office, which have been preserved in their entirety, show that as much as fifty per cent. on income was on one occasion paid in eleven months, and as much as seventy per cent. within the year, which would imply a reimposition of the tax an hundred and forty times. But the fact is that the half per cent., or "*Decima*," as it was called in Florentine official and financial language, very soon came to be considered merely as the unit of taxation, so many "*Decime*" as were needed for the nonce having been habitually called for at one fell swoop, which when paid gave no sort of assurance as to the length of time that might elapse before the tax-gatherer would "call again." Thus it is recorded that from the year 1430 to the year 1453, 4,875,000 florins had been paid in forced loans by seventy families of the city alone! And from 1427, the year in which the new law began to be worked, to 1430, the exchequer of the Commonwealth had received from this source 1,459,000 florins! *

However great may have been the relief felt by the

* Pagnini della Decima, vol. i. p. 33.

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poorer citizens from the "catasta" and the law of 1427, it is clear that it was impossible to continue the drain of such sums from any portion of the population without fatally sapping the sources of the national wealth. It was a killing of the goose that laid the golden eggs. "It was no remedy for the evils caused by the excessive frequency of loans," writes Pagnini, "that the sums lent were to be repaid; nor even did the punctual payment of the interest avail to this end. The public, deprived of the capital necessary for its traffic, which produced much larger profits than the interest paid by the public funds, were in very small if in any degree indemnified by the repayment of the amount after a certain time, or by the interest which the State paid them."

It is very intelligible that it would by no means suit a prosperous merchant to take from him his capital, and pay him five per cent. for it. Nevertheless, the language cited above from the very competent author of the great work on the Florentine taxes and trade serves to indicate the richness of the profits made and expected from the Florentine commerce; and helps at the same time to measure the enormity of the sacrifice imposed upon the community by the payment of the huge sums which have been named. No financier of the present day of vast accumulated masses of capital would speak of a punctually paid five per cent. as worth little or nothing by way of recompense for money abstracted from the purposes of trade.

"It will be remembered," continues Pagnini, "that the community of Florence possessed no revenue save the product of the customs, and that whatever was needed beyond that for the supply of its extraordinary expenses was obtained from the citizens by the means of these loans, which the State did not retain, but restored after a certain time. There did not exist at that time, or till long afterwards,*

* Until 1494.

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ordinary taxes of the nature of those which were in use at a subsequent epoch. All the imposts were extraordinary, and were exacted according to the needs of the State, subject to repayment. When these needs arose, orders were given for the raising of the sum required according to the scheme set forth by the law of 1427; and the amount was distributed in the proportion of the sum which stood against the name of each tax-payer in the books of the *catasta*. And this happened sometimes as often as twelve times in the course of the year, without breathing-time from one loan to the next. And these were sometimes heavier and sometimes lighter, as it might happen. By this and by no other means were those prodigious sums collected which the critical circumstances of the times so frequently required."

In short, the administration was entrusted with an apparently bottomless purse of Fortunatus, their drafts on which were limited solely by the requirements of the hour. But the apparently bottomless purse of Fortunatus began, after two generations or so of statesmen had been dipping their hands in it, to show symptoms which imperatively demanded some further modification of the financial system of the Commonwealth. And on the 5th of February, 1495, a new law came into operation, of which the following were the principal features. Thenceforward real property, houses and land alone, were to be subject to taxation. Persons, industry, commerce, and "every kind of profit which does not naturally grow again," were to be exempted. The former law sought to strike at the property of the citizens throughout the world. The new law confined itself to that which was situated within the territory of the Commonwealth. The method of valuation of property and distribution of the tax remained as before; but the "*Decima*," or tenth part of the estimated interest or fruit of the capital at five per cent., was to become a

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standing ordinary tax, payable every year, and once a year only; and that as a tax, and not as a loan. In fact the tax, as then established, amounted to a ten per cent. income-tax on the proceeds of real property.

It is remarkable enough that in an eminently commercial and moneyed community it should have been sought to supply all the needs of the State by such means; and surprising that an amount of ignorance of financial subjects so great as is manifested by some of the provisions of the law should have existed among a people so shrewd and so habituated to deal with monetary affairs. It is evident that the leading idea which influenced the framers of such a scheme of taxation was the desirability of causing all the burthens of the State to be borne by realized property, saved, secured, and as it were stored up, to the entire exemption of all such as was still being made use of for the production of more wealth. Masses of money existed, and the art of drawing fruit from these was well understood. But the idea that any one might consider such sums of money in the light of stable permanent property, and contemplate living with his hands by his sides on the produce of them, does not seem to have yet become conceivable. But it is strange, on the other hand, that in considering the produce of land as the sole kind of property (with the exception of the rent of houses let to a tenant), which is perpetually reproduced, they should have overlooked the fact that land will *not* give its fruit without the expenditure of labour and other representatives of value. And still stranger is the confusion of ideas involved in the provision of the law which directs the exemption of all houses inhabited by their owners.*

Yet it was under this system that the wealthiest community of the middle ages reached a degree of financial

* Pagnini della Decima, vol. i. p. 40.

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prosperity which has never been equalled save by England, and accomplished a series of national efforts, involving every kind of expenditure, which have made the marvel and the admiration of every succeeding generation.

END OF VOL. II.

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